

SPIRIT OF GOD

**A Study of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
and its Application**

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A study of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics, especially Volumes I and II, reveals that Barth's doctrine of the Holy Spirit provides basic insights to his entire programme of Christian reflection upon God and man. Barth's much-celebrated attack upon all forms of "Christian natural theology", particularly in the Neo-Protestant tradition which originates well before Kant, must be understood as a positive confessional stance on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Thus the insertion of the filioque clause in the 1014 formulation of the Nicaeano-Constantinopolitan Creed and the preparation history of that event becomes the key orthodox root of Barth's project.

In order to satisfy the requirements of Barth's massively Christocentric system, the study begins (Chapter 1) with a survey of the doctrine of God which emerges in the pages of the Church Dogmatics. The theological idea of the Incarnation provides Barth with the basis of this doctrine. So as to effectively combat the philosophical theology of Kant, Barth recognized, a Christian doctrine of God must already contain a doctrine of the knowledge of God. This epistemology, Barth declares, is the "revealed" dogma of the Trinity, a direct interpretation of the Johannine formula: $\delta \lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi \acute{\epsilon}\chi\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\omicron$. The full unfolding of the dogma of the Trinity comprises the bulk of Barth's "confessional" theology.

Chapters 2 and 3 of the study deal specifically with the Barth's doctrine of the Holy Spirit and its application.

Only in relation to a fully-developed dogmatics of the third Person of the Trinity, is a theological anthropology possible. Barth's divergence from his early "dialectic theology" colleague Friedrich Gogarten, briefly concretized in the latter's alliance with the German Christians in 1933, can be seen as the result of their inner disagreement on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The Barmen Declaration of 1934, co-prepared by Barth, contains in its central (third) article a confessional formula on the divinity of the Holy Spirit which might have been drawn directly from the pages of the Church Dogmatics. Thus the political implications of Barth's so-called "dialectic theology" or "theology of crisis" (terms which had already fallen into disfavor by the 1930's) transcended the immediate controversy of the German Church Struggle. In effect Barth's main interest for theology was to liberate it from the "ante-Nicene confusion" which all forms of Neo-Protestant or "post-Enlightenment" theology had created.

To state this in human terms, it is only by the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit that man becomes aware of his ownmost need for the gift of God's grace already given in Jesus Christ. This awareness, Barth repeatedly states, was lost in Neo-Protestantism's increasingly vigorous affirmation of the self, the "I", the $\epsilon\gamma\omega$ of man with all its attendant emotions. Liturgically, the significance of the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan Creed in its Western definition has been gradually forgotten as a result, while at the same time the

confessional hymns of Luther and the early church have all but fallen into disuse in the Protestant worship service.

To the present author, the present implications of this Protestant "heresy" in relation to the Holy Spirit are manifold: the decline of "main-line" denominational membership, the rise of so-called "conservative" or "fundamentalist" church groups, the serious danger of a revival of church-state alliances within the context of a year of national celebration, and others. The survival of the church itself is an open issue. Yet for Barth it must remain open, if the church is to be truly led by the Holy Spirit. Thus the maintenance of a confessional stance in the church, through its teaching, worship and organization, becomes the church's most important activity in a "post-religious" age or any other: for this objective, a new restatement of Barth's systematics is a legitimate and necessary task.

INTRODUCTION

If history has its way, there will be a time when beginning theological students will not study the writings of Karl Barth apart from survey courses in the Church Fathers. And, as present trends continue, this time may not be many years hence. The unbridled words of tribute which have been heaped upon the memory of Barth, such as naming him in the same breath with Calvin and even Augustine, have had the predictable effects of securing for Barth his "rightful" place of honor in the history of Christian theology and simultaneously hinting that his contribution will soon be safely embalmed and laid to rest beside those of his notable predecessors in a few obscure archives. Certainly the movement within Barth's work itself has helped to foster such a distancing process: the commentary on Romans gave way to the Church Dogmatics, as the early "dialectic theology" gave way to "Barthianism". Robinson notes that since a new generation of Barthian "scholastics" is hardly a live theological option today, the compelling magnitude of the Dogmatics might lead to a whole generation which simply ignored¹ the greatest theologian of our times.

An Inauguraldissertation presented by a Lutheran pastor from America and accepted by the theology faculty

¹
James M. Robinson (ed.) The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968), p. 9.

at the University of Muenster² confirms that students have long since begun to treat Barth as more of an interesting theological antique than a current theological challenge. The paper, taking into account the "pronounced dissimilarity" between the systematic theologies of Karl Barth and Albrecht Ritschl, sets out to map the "particular continuity" which presumably exists between them, through a survey of their respective doctrines of the holiness, righteousness and wrath of God.³ Interesting as his exercise turns out to be, Jersild might just as well have set out to prove that Barth was made of green cheese.

We live in a strange new theological world which includes a new interest in the process theism inaugurated by Whitehead, with a corresponding natural theology whose vivacity would surely have enraged the old preacher from Switzerland, a world of so-called "liberation theologies", a world which quests after new pictures of man and the global interrelationships between men, to mention a few areas among many. Does Barth have a place in this world?

It will be the purpose of this study to confirm that he does, exactly at the place where the Word of God meets man in scripture. We have witnessed in America over the last fifteen years a marked decline in the membership of

² Paul Jersild, "The Holiness, Righteousness and Wrath of God in the Theologies of Albrecht Ritschl and Karl Barth" (Inauguraldissertation, Muenster, 1962).

³ Ibid., p. 1.

certain "main line" church denominations, and a simultaneous increase in other denominations which may profess a "return" to Biblical truth and teaching. At the same time, we have recently witnessed the most fundamental questioning and challenging of our national systems and structures since the Civil War: the desperate termination of a miserable and terrifying conflict in Vietnam, the removal of an American president from office.

If there is to be a church for the next century, we stand now in the *Káipos* of that struggle for survival. This is made especially clear by the reflected light of a year of national celebration. Can the church, in the words of Barth, be a church to the state but not for the state? In a more basic sense, can the church be the church?

The church can be the church, and will be so insofar as the Holy Spirit guarantees this existence. But here we have traversed the boundary into dogmatics. It is upon this crucial area of Barth's Church Dogmatics that the present study will focus. We shall move from a survey of Barth's doctrine of God as the revealed doctrine of the Trinity to a more specific consideration of the Barthian understanding of the Holy Spirit. In this way hopefully the requirements of Barth's massively Christocentric system will be met while at the same time indicating the legitimacy and necessity of a new restatement of Barthian systematics for a "post-religious" age.

Scottsdale, Arizona, February 16, 1976.

Chapter One

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

1. Revelation and Knowledge

In the Church Dogmatics of Karl Barth, the doctrine of God which emerges is based upon the idea of the Incarnation. The absolutely singular and historical event of God's self-revelation in the man Jesus, as attested by the formula *ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο*, is the starting-point from which all theological investigation must proceed. At times Barth will rely heavily upon Johannine phrases and ideas in order to construct a "sacramental" Christology, i.e., one based upon what Barth calls "the first sacrament": the humanity of Jesus.¹ For Barth, "sacrament" and "revelation" are identical.² In turn, theology can only be an active, participating "theological existence". The sacrament of the Word appearing in the flesh (Jn. 1.14), unreservedly a Biblical confession of faith, thus comprises the terminus a quo and the terminus ad quem of all Christian reflection. There can be no theology without revelation, revelation seen with

¹ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (London: Clark, 1949-69). Due to its use as the extensive primary source for this study, references to the Church Dogmatics will be abbreviated as "volume number, part number (year of original publication in German), page number." II, 1 (1940), 52.

² Ibid.

the eyes of faith. At no point does Barth venture outside this Kirkegaardian circle of Word and hearer, revelation and faith.

Due to its "revealed" character, Barth's doctrine of God already contains a doctrine of the knowledge of God.³ This knowledge of God is in no way derivative; its reality precedes its possibility.⁴ In faith, man knows God as an object because God has already shared with man his own objective self-knowledge.⁵ Through and by God's revelation man participates in the knowledge of God, with the knowledge of faith. Here and throughout the Dogmatics, Barth's theology performs a "Copernican revolution" upon all epistemology derived from Kant: for Christian dogmatics, there can be no a priori knowledge of God.⁶

By recognizing that the possibility of the knowledge of God must be grounded in the reality of the knowledge of God, Barth states his opposition to all possibilities and forms of "natural theology" as cleanly as possible. There can be no independent witness to God outside God's revelation in Jesus Christ; faith is not a "preliminary decision" which

³ II, 1 (1940), 32.

⁴ I, 1 (1932), 5. The first half-volume of Church Dogmatics has a different history than all the rest. Originally Barth's project was entitled Christliche Dogmatik ("Christian Dogmatics"), launched in 1927. The work met with much critical resistance, and Barth rewrote the first volume for publication under the present title in 1932.

⁵ I, 1 (1932), 62.

⁶ I, 1 (1932), 5.

is made by man in light of an inherent human potential (Ritschl) or a human religious self-consciousness (Schleiermacher). Faith is the demand, the claim which is laid upon man by the Biblical witness to revelation.⁷ For Barth, the awakening of faith in the believer is co-terminus with the revelation of God in Christ: the assertion that God is God, and that man is man. No human deed or motive, no human possibility or "readiness" of man for God can ever be the true readiness of man for God.⁸

The profoundly "dialectical" significance of Barth's understanding of revelation lies in that man's existence alone is subsumed under the dialectic of certainty and uncertainty, under the YES and the NO of God. Man's existence is an open question. God does not enter into this dialectic of certainty and uncertainty.⁹ The expression "dialectic theology", which proved so influential in German theology during the Twenties and Thirties as applied to the "circle" led by Barth and his colleague, Friedrich Gogarten, contains the danger of indicating a form of philosophical theology, i.e., one which is based upon a "dialectic philosophy". Insofar as such a danger exists, the term should not be used to describe the theological programme of the Church Dogmatics. Barth's divergence from Gogarten, as witnessed by the formidable retraction of the earlier Christliche Dogmatik volume

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II, 1 (1940), 110.

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II, 1 (1940), 75.

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II, 1 (1940), 131.

and the beginning of a totally new project, was a self-conscious negating of any possibility that the construction of a philosophical "proper anthropology" should be seen as a main task of theology:¹⁰

Theology can learn nothing from philosophy, unless theology allows the replacement of her "theme" by a philosophical "theme".¹¹

In short, Barth recognized that only a confessing theology of the Word of God could avoid the pitfall of natural theology. Man stands under the grace and judgment of God, and even the possibility of his need for God's grace must be rooted in the reality of Jesus Christ. Only as his own closedness to God is pierced by God does man become aware of that closedness. In all his "latent" possibilities, man is and remains the enemy of grace.¹² For Barth, a "natural theology" is but the theological expression of the fact that man does not possess an inherent readiness for God in his revelation.¹³

If, then, for Barth there is no human possibility for the knowledge of God apart from the sovereign self-revelation of God in Christ, how does this singular possibility occur?¹⁴ Barth would say that in Christ, God becomes objective for man, and simultaneously determines man's existence "in the

¹⁰ I, 1 (1932), 143-4.

¹² II, 1 (1940), 145.

¹⁴ II, 1 (1940), 17. Barth says that any object which man knows himself to be distinct from is known "objectively" by man.

¹¹ I, 1 (1932), 141.

¹³ II, 1 (1940), 135.

flesh". From the human side, man is graciously allowed to partake of God's self-knowledge, in which God is objective to himself.¹⁵ And the revealed form of God's self-knowledge, Barth declares, reaches man in the Biblical witness to the triune God. From a dogmatic standpoint, Barth's doctrine of God becomes the dogma of the Trinity.

2. The Trinity

As it is concerned with the presupposition of the "Who" of God, Barth sees, the doctrine of the Trinity rests at the apex of all Christian dogmatics.¹⁶ The Trinitarian question precedes all other dogmatic inquiries. It is an interpretation of and grounded in the statement, "God reveals himself". To return to the question of the sole knowledge of God in which man participates, man stands paradoxically in the knowledge (realization) of his own lack of knowledge of God. Even in his revelation, God remains a mystery to man.¹⁷ Man's knowledge of God is a knowledge which determines man in his finitude; in revelation God assumes the form of man and simultaneously disposes of it.¹⁸ Thus the "unveiling" of God in Christ is at once a "veiling" of God in himself: every human knowledge is a limited knowledge. Yet man does participate in the revelation of God. This three-fold event of revelation, involving

¹⁵
II, 1 (1940), 49.
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II, 1 (1940), 40.

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I, 1 (1932), 340.
¹⁸
I, 1 (1932), 369.

veiling, unveiling and participation (impartation) becomes for Barth the structural principle which interprets the idea of the Trinity.¹⁹ God is God himself. God is his self-revelation. God is what he creates in man.

²⁰ Upon the question of "models" of the Trinity, Barth notes that in his earlier volume of Christian Dogmatics the statement that the questions of the three characteristics of revelation were the subject, predicate and object of the sentence, "Deus dixit", had fostered "contemptuous reproach" on the part of his colleagues. He had been accused of offering a "grammatical proof" of the Trinity, in effect drawing a philosophical derivation thereof. Barth takes pains to note that he had only intended the "grammatical" example as a "perspicuous formula" of a proof already received. Yet in a later connection the relative weakness of Barth's position on this detail is again apparent. He is subject to attack from the old Augustinian idea of the vestigium Trinitatis, that is, the question of whether the Trinity can be derived from an analog²¹ outside the Biblical witness. Barth, of course, is eager to declare that the doctrine of the Trinity derives from the revealed knowledge of the Lordship of Christ and "nowhere else", yet without a strictly-defined concept of analogy as yet (Volume II, Part 2 with its section on analogy will not appear for another eight years) he is faced

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I, 1 (1932), 340f., 380f.

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I, 1 (1932), 384.

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I, 1 (1932), 340.

with a difficulty. For the time being, Barth will be content to perform a familiar "turn" upon the evidence of the secular vestigia Trinitatis: that these "models" are informed by the doctrine of the Trinity, not the other way around.²²

Along a parallel line, Barth guards against the imposition of rationalistic pictures upon the Biblical "indications" of the doctrine of the Trinity (e.g., I Cor. 12.4, Eph. 4.4) by re-emphasizing the historicity and singularity of God's revelation. There can be no comparisons drawn between the revelation attested in the Bible and similar "phenomenae" in other world religions, subsumed under a "history of religions": there are no general principles of God or revelation which find specific manifestations in the Judaeo-Christian teaching.²³ Naturally, for Barth the "historicity" (viz., historisch) of revelation is an interpretation of the third mode of man's knowledge of God--the prior establishment of that knowledge through the self-impartation of God.

In relation to the church-historical doctrine of the Trinity, Barth produces a lucid commentary and defense based upon the theological principle that the doctrine of the

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I, 1 (1932), 390ff.

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I, 1 (1932), 378. Barth says that in this mistaken attempt to "generalize" revelation to a philosophical principle, the Philosophy of Religion of the Enlightenment including the thinking of Lessing, Kant, Herder, Fichte and Hegel is the "lowest depth of modern misunderstanding of the Bible."

Trinity follows from Christology.²⁴ In the ancient Church's confessions of faith (Nicaea, Constantinople, Chalcedon), there are never three "objects" of faith but one: Yahweh-Kyrios, God the Lord. Barth unhesitatingly equates the idea of the essence of God (*οὐσία* , essentia), which was the crucial issue at Nicaea, with the Biblical concept of the Lordship of God.²⁵ It is the assertion of the singularity of the essence of God (*ὁμοουσία*) which stood in orthodoxy as the bastion against all attempts to make Christ a creature of God or to posit a "higher" God behind the three manifestations of the Trinity, i.e., the Subordinationist and Modalist heresies. Barth sees all anti-Trinitarian positions falling into a single category: the history of the attempt to establish reason alongside revelation as a source of the knowledge of God.²⁶ In effect, the development of anti-Trinitarian "dogma" comprises the systematization of Barth's understanding of human sin:²⁷ the attempt by man to set himself up in the position of God. In relation to the question of the "personhood" of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Barth carefully says that the lack of an adequate definition leaves the pre-Nineteenth Century concept of "personhood" as only a reminder of the problem of

²⁴ I, 1 (1932), 362. This is the early insight of Irenaeus, confirmed by v. Harnack and Otto Scheel.

²⁵ I, 1 (1932), 401. ²⁶ I, 1 (1932), 404f.

²⁷ See II, 1 (1940), 130ff.

describing God's threeness-in-oneness.²⁸ There exists in the unity of God's revelation three modes of God's existence, each arranged in a unique relation with the other two: the doctrine of the Trinity includes a dispositio among the three "Persons".²⁹ The full elucidation of this dispositio belongs to the doctrine of God as such.

The idea of the Trinity must be continually referred back to the reality of God's revelation. Only as "characteristics" of the single concept of God's divine self-impartation, i.e., as relationships with revelation, are the modes of God's being meaningfully distinguished.³⁰ God's one-ness implies his three-ness, not the other way around. In this connection Barth will propose the descriptive noun Dreieinigkeit³¹ as the term which properly conflates "threeness in oneness" and "oneness in threeness", or at the very least serves as a reminder of the difficulty of developing formulae for the Trinity.

From within the nexus of the singular historical event of revelation it is possible to witness to various "appropriations" or functions which are peculiar to each mode of God's existence: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This

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I, 1 (1932), 412.

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I, 1 (1932), 407. Barth will say later in I, 1 (p. 548) that all statements in this section on the so-called "immanent Trinity" are nothing more than confirmations of the major premises of the "economic Trinity".

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I, 1 (1932), 416.

³¹

I, 1 (1932), 423.

is a time-honored practice of orthodox dogmatics,³² and a legitimate devotional practice as long as the triadic sets of "appropriations" serve to support and signify the mystery of the Lordship of God in Christ rather than to reduce the mystery to another analog or vestigium Trinitatis.

3. The Method of Analogy

For Barth, the knowability of God by man consists entirely in the readiness of God for man. Only God's "divine good-pleasure" makes the human knowledge of God an objective reality and possibility. Even the Biblical idea of Lordship cannot give man a positive analog of the nature and being of God.³³ This is true for each of the other specific "appropriations" attested of God in the Bible: e.g., Creator, Reconciler, Redeemer. In the supreme ineffability of his veiledness, God is a-conceptual.³⁴ How, then, can man "appropriate" the knowledge of God to himself? The old Roman Catholic answer to this question, viz. that God posits in creation an analogy of being between himself and man, is the answer against which Barth is bitterly opposed. The analogia entis, he sees, is the root of every heuristic

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I, 1 (1932), 428-9, Cf., Augustine and especially Aquinas. The two Catholic "rules" for formulating the "appropriations", with the added third "Evangelical" rule, are: 1) The appropriation must not be arbitrary; 2) the appropriation must not be exclusive of one of the modes of the Godhead; 3) the appropriation must not be "invented freely".

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II, 1 (1940), 76.

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II, 1 (1940), 190.

attempt at a "natural theology":

...Natural theology is no more and no less the unavoidable expression of the fact that in the reality and possibility of man as such an openness for the grace of God and therefore a readiness for the knowability of God in his revelation is not at all evident.³⁵

In other words, Christian natural theology is doomed to failure, as it involves a contradiction in terms. There is no "parity" between God's self-knowledge and man's participation in that knowledge, between the veiling and the unveiling of God; yet the decisiveness of the unveiling of God (that is, the divinity of Christ) means that the two are related at least dialectically. Further, this dialectical relationship is ordered toward the telos which is God's
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gracious purpose for man.

The Lutheran orthodox theologian Quenstedt provides Barth with a good review of the development of the idea of analogy. Along with other Lutherans and with Aquinas, Quenstedt accepted an analogica way of speaking about God and man. More specifically, God and man were seen as related by an analogia attributionis on the basis of the analogans, i.e., God. So far, so good. But Quenstedt made his false move when he insisted that the relationship was further an analogia attributionis intrinseca, an analogy properly "in" both the
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analogans (God) and the analogatum (man). Barth observes that the intrinseca of Quenstedt's formulation circumvents

³⁵
II, 1 (1940), 135.

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II, 1 (1940), 237.

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II, 1 (1940), 236.

the essential Protestant idea of justification, and thus causes it to collapse back into the old Catholic idea of the analogia entis.³⁸

Yet not even by subordinating the analogia entis to an analogia fidei, Barth recognizes, can he adequately combat the Catholic identification of the Yahweh of scripture with "Baal", viz., the Aristotelian-Stoic concept of being.³⁹ Something more fundamental is needed. The vivacity of the analogia entis and the dangerous misguidance which it gives to theology dictate that the doctrine must be discredited ipso facto: from the witness of scripture. Certainly, if pressed to the point Barth will concede that his interest is "only in an analogy to be created by God's grace, the analogy of grace and faith to which we say yes as to the inaccessible which is made accessible to us in incomprehensible reality,"⁴⁰ yet he cautions against merely contending one Latin formulation over against another. When one again appeals to scripture, what is the Word which is spoken to the question of man's reception of God's knowledge? Barth admits that the movement from and to the hiddenness of God as the terminus of all knowledge of God may not necessarily be movement within the circulus veritatis Dei, although it is definitely movement within a circle. Even the question of whether man participates in an analogia gratia or an analogia fidei is a question which must be asked in faith. Faith must submit

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II, 1 (1940), 237.

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II, 1 (1940), 84.

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II, 1 (1940), 85.

itself to the deepest and most radical line of questioning, the questioning of God. Faith cannot merely abandon its knowledge before God any more than it can lay claim to that knowledge. Faith must submit itself to the Anfechtung⁴¹ of God. In the end result, faith can only appeal again and again to the grace of God.

If it (faith) is genuine, it definitely does not mean anchoring but putting out to sea.⁴²

It will not make light of the question of the veracity of man's knowledge of God, which we have seen improperly answered by Roman Catholicism and Lutheran orthodoxy, to say that Barth sees man in faith related to God by an analogia Christi. For Christ alone is the place where the knowledge of God, in all its shattering reality, meets man. Man's knowledge of God is necessarily the knowledge of God present in Jesus Christ,⁴³ the knowledge that even faith as a human work is a "lost work". Stated simply, in Barth's system faith is coterminus with the humanity of Christ.

4. The Being of God

For Barth, God is known paradoxically by man who cannot know God. Even more mysteriously, this knowledge of God is not possible apart from a knowledge of the entirety of God's being.⁴⁴ This knowledge exists in Jesus Christ,

⁴¹ II, 1 (1940), 247.

⁴³ II, 1 (1940), 253.

⁴² II, 1 (1940), 252.

⁴⁴ II, 1 (1940), 52.

the objective reality and therefore possibility of the knowledge of God. In Christ, man is made aware that God is a handelnde God, a living God: a God whose being is one with his action.⁴⁵

Barth's interest in the Trinity leads him to assert that the acts of God happen in the (undivided) unity of spirit and nature.⁴⁶ God cannot be interpreted as "purely spiritual"; otherwise the understanding of the being of God collapses into the knowledge of an "hypostasized" human attribute.⁴⁷ On the other hand the "false realism" that claims the knowledge of God as "purely natural" is the knowledge of no God at all. Here we must again note the influence of Barth's sogennante "sacramental theology". The concrete character of God's revealed self-knowledge is a twofold character, spirit and nature, undivided in the unity of the person of God.

From the side of God, the divine being which is God's act is a self-moving being, sovereign and independent: in his freedom God is at the disposal of God alone. The being of God is a being which in every way confronts man, even as man who is received into fellowship with God through Christ.⁴⁸ For even as the fellowship of love, the "blessings of the Godhead" will always be new, always exceptional, always judgment and grace for man. The Biblical formula *ὁ Θεός*

⁴⁵ II, 1 (1940), 263.

⁴⁷ II, 1 (1940), 267.

⁴⁸ II, 1 (1940), 275.

⁴⁶ II, 1 (1940), 267.

⁴⁸ II, 1 (1940), 275.

ἀγάπη ἐστίν (I Jn. 4.8, 16) must be understood as an interpretation of God's sending of Christ, not as a reversible tautology. In revelation, God makes man aware of his God-head. For man, however, the God-head of God consists in the fact that he loves.⁴⁹

Barth lists four assertions about the being of God⁵⁰ in love:

- 1) God's loving is concerned with a seeking and creation of fellowship for its own sake. The "good" which God communicates to man is not an intermediate "good" which reflects God's primary being as summum bonum (as Ritschl would have had it), but is the "good" in itself.
- 2) God's loving is concerned with a seeking and creation of fellowship without any reference to an existing aptitude or worthiness on the part of the loved.
- 3) God's loving is an end in itself. Even though God wills his own glory and our salvation, God does not love man for the sake of the fulfillment of man's religious destiny (Geschick), even if that destiny is understood as the "moral association" of all mankind in the Kingdom of God (again, Ritschl).
- 4) God's loving does not require man as its object; man participates by grace in the "overflowing of the divine love". No understanding of love which man can produce will be able to prove anything except the Godlessness of man.

Clearly in this "elucidation" of the love of God Barth is stating his own theological position as sharply as possible over against all forms of Enlightenment theology (especially that of Ritschl), and the philosophies which attended those forms. Barth wryly observes that Feuerbach

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II, 1 (1940), 275.

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II, 1 (1940), 276-81.

of all persons was the one who really destroyed the idea that God is the predicate of the human subject--yet the fathers of the "modern doctrine of God" went forcefully forward, mistakenly counting this "cultured despiser" as⁵¹ a weapon in their own camp.

Rather than continuing on the theological line that would seek to understand the Person of God, which was the dead-end street that orthodoxy had followed in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity, Barth seeks to understand the life, love and uniqueness of God's revelation under the single idea of God's freedom.⁵² The loving act of God cannot be separated from God's freedom. Further, Barth says, God's freedom includes his aseity and his absoluteness which conditions his aseity.⁵³ In other words, God's freedom is a freedom that indwells in him and requires no external validation or qualification, while at the same time God's freedom is a freedom which is free to overcome that indwelling. Barth would say that God's "immanent" freedom with man is the particular content of his "transcendent" freedom a se, as himself. In this freedom, Christ is the principle of God's immanence.⁵⁴ In the last result, "freedom" is an idea which springs from the particularity of the divine act of freedom in Christ, a possibility which only exists for man on the basis of man's knowledge of God (Cf.

⁵¹
II, 1 (1940), 295.

⁵³
II, 1 (1940), 306-13.

⁵²
II, 1 (1940), 297.

⁵⁴
II, 1 (1940), 317-8.

the two-fold character of the formula of Galatians 5:1:
viz., "For freedom Christ has set you free!")

5. The Perfections of God

In order to fill out the picture of God's being as revealed to man in Christ, Barth is now willing to enter the region of dogmatics formerly treated under the heading, "the Doctrine of the Attributes of God".⁵⁵ In God's perfect freedom in Christ, then there exist a multiplicity of perfections or attributes. In order that there be a confirmation of the unity and distinction in the being of God between his freedom (veiling) and his loving (unveiling),⁵⁶ there must be a two-fold series of the divine perfections.⁵⁶ Yet in order that this procedure of "conceptualizing" the perfections of God does not make the mistake of trying to separate the "transcendent" attributes from the "immanent" attributes, the perfections of God can and must be listed pairwise and in the "unity" of a dialectical relationship to each other. In this way Barth intends to avoid a "common perception" of God,⁵⁷ i.e., another form of natural theology.

Barth states that the grace and holiness of God are related in this connection, as are the patience and wisdom of God and the mercy and righteousness of God. These he categorizes as the perfections of the divine loving. Under

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II, 1 (1940), 322.
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II, 1 (1940), 347.

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II, 1 (1940), 344.

the category of the perfections of the divine freedom are listed the unity and omnipresence of God, the constancy and omnipotence of God, and the eternity and glory of God. Obviously the first pair of perfections of God's loving are the basis for the rest in that they interpret God's revelation as love. It is upon this pair of perfections that we shall concentrate: the grace and holiness of God.

Barth begins with the first perfection of God, God's grace, as it is "directly confronted and controlled and purified"⁵⁸ by the perfection of God's holiness. Grace is a free and "supernatural" gift to man insofar as it is the Giver himself who is the gift. The possibility of grace comes from its reality in the "archetypal form of grace",⁵⁹ the Incarnation:

Grace denotes, comprehensively, the manner in which God, in his essential being, turns toward us.

Strictly speaking, the concept of grace involves God's confrontation of the utter unworthiness in man and his overcoming of the same. Only the negative implication of God's love for man is involved in the concept of grace; the positive implication belongs properly to the idea of God's mercy.⁶⁰ As grace from God himself, and as God himself, grace establishes man's forgiveness. At this point, Barth declares the fundamental definition of human sin; it

⁵⁸
II, 1 (1940), 353.

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II, 1 (1940), 355.

⁵⁹
II, 1 (1940), 354.

is not man's philosophical or anthropological or psychological "definition" of sin, but rather God's definition: sin is enmity against God's grace.⁶¹ Since the mystery of God's revelation is present in the act of grace, only in faith can man recognize it as grace. Only in faith is man aware of grace, and only in faith is he aware of his own sin.

Much less is man aware of the form of grace which exists primarily as the being of God, i.e., the way in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist in "complete participation" with each other.⁶² He is only aware of the form of grace which reaches across the chasm of his creaturehood. Yet, Barth says, only insofar as it is the grace of the Father for the Son and the grace of the Son for the Father by the Holy Spirit,⁶³ is it the divine reality of grace which reaches man. From the human side, the distinction between "primary" and "secondary" grace (this begs a more adequate terminology) raises for us the perfection of God which is co-related to the grace of God--his holiness.

Barth's treatment is aimed at avoiding the mistake of listing God's holiness as a secondary or tertiary attribute of God, and therefore as such denying the unity of God. For

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II, 1 (1940), 357.

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See I, 1 (1932), 424-5, esp. the article on the history and meaning of the idea of perichoresis.

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II, 1 (1940), 358.

the reflexive relationship of God's grace and holiness, here attested, interprets by extension the co-divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. In his holiness God remains "true to himself",⁶⁴ exercising the judgment upon man's existence from which there can be no escape. As Lord of the covenant between himself and his creature, God loves-- and his love is at once distinguished by holiness and⁶⁵ grace.

In his natural state, man cannot exist in the face of God's holiness. Only in the opposition between himself and God which is experienced when man knows that God is holy, is there the new possibility of man's acceptance of God's gracious purpose for him. Ritschl, in his thinking that the instances of the wrath (judgment) of God as attested in the Old Testament must be regarded as "forensic",⁶⁶ weakened the ideas of God's grace and love.⁶⁷ In God's love in Christ, the grace and holiness of God reach man--and only in the dialectic of judgment and forgiveness can man enter⁶⁸ into relationship with God.

⁶⁴ II, 1 (1940), 360.

⁶⁵ II, 1 (1940), 360.

⁶⁶ Albrecht Ritschl, The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation (Edinburgh: Clark, 1902), p. 303ff. Ritschl understands the love and wrath of God on the basis of the analogy of the paternal education of children.

⁶⁷ II, 1 (1940), 366.

⁶⁸ See II, 1 (1940), 103.

6. "The Word Became Flesh"

For Barth, the fundamental proposition of all dogmatics is the reality of God's election of man in Jesus Christ. In revelation, Christ is the knowability of God to himself as well as the knowability of God to man.⁶⁹ This means that in the unequivocal act of grace that is Jesus Christ in his life, passion and resurrection, the impossible happens: God creates in man a readiness for God where there was none, and could be none.⁷⁰ This assertion comprises the radicality of Barth's understanding of the imago Dei--in revelation, God determines us to bear witness to his existence in our existence.⁷¹

In light of God's Word in Christ, there is no further word which man can utter; there is nothing which he can add to what God has accomplished. In the "transcendent man" Jesus, the enmity of man against grace has been overcome.⁷²

In statements such as these, Barth hints at his interpretation of the doctrine of the Atonement. Aulēn⁷³ noted that in the Church Dogmatics Barth directly refuted the humanistic understanding of the Atonement which held sway throughout the period of Liberal Protestantism, and

⁶⁹ II, 1 (1940), 150.

⁷⁰ II, 1 (1940), 161.

⁷¹ II, 1 (1940), 188.

⁷² II, 1 (1940), 152.

⁷³ Gustaf Aulēn, Christus Victor (New York: Macmillan, 1969), p. 145.

further that Barth may have been opening the door to a new revival of the orthodox doctrine of the Atonement which has its roots in Irenaeus. Barth is willing to emphasize the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus as determinative for man's true possibility of a relationship with God.⁷⁴ All of the benefits of God's love are available to man, through Christ alone. This indeed is the strength of Barth's doctrine of God. Jesus Christ is the objective reality of God's revelation, the reality from which the possibility of God's revelation may be "read off from".⁷⁵ His name is the "ultimate word" about God and man.⁷⁶

For Barth, Christ alone is he who delimits God's freedom, and in turn delimits man's existence. From both God's side and man's, Jesus Christ is the "exception that proves the rule" concerning God's divinity and man's sinfulness. From the human side, Jesus Christ is rightly understood as the humanity of God.⁷⁷ In the Biblical witness to the appearance of the Word in the flesh, we have not the "specific instance" of a general anthropology,⁷⁸ but a determinative analytic statement. For, as Barth declares, the Biblical concept of $\sigma\alpha\rho\kappa$ is not a neutral

⁷⁴ II, 1 (1940), 152.

⁷⁵ I, 2 (1938), 25.

⁷⁶ I, 2 (1938), 24.

⁷⁷ I, 2 (1938), 41. Barth says in his little article of the same name (printed in The Humanity of God, Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960, p. 37-65) that if he had been invited to speak on such a topic in 1920 when he opposed v. Harnack, "...We would have suspected evil implications in this topic."

⁷⁸ I, 2 (1938), 22.

term but is descriptive of the relationship between God and man.⁷⁹ "Flesh" is the manner in which man stands exposed in the face of God's holiness and grace. Thus for there to be an unveiling of God to man, in a sense the Word had to become flesh--not in the sense of an analogia entis which would assert nothing but the false divinity of man, but rather in the sense of being positively determinative of the creaturely existence of man.

We are not saying too much when we say that really and originally only Jesus Christ is a man who is flesh, and then derivatively and secondarily those (who) are in faith are one flesh with him.⁸⁰

Thus to the very depth of human existence the grace of God is at work in the person of Jesus. It cannot be over-emphasized that Barth's doctrine of God in the Church Dogmatics is a doctrine of the triumph of grace for man. Everything keeps referring back to this one truth. This means that man, in every aspect of his creaturely existence, is able to quite un-dialectically echo the words of Job 19.25: "I know that my Redeemer lives."

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I, 2 (1938), 40.

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I, 2 (1938), 44.

Chapter Two

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The Question

We have seen how Barth clearly and forcefully derives his doctrine of God from Christology. Jesus Christ, the objective reality and possibility of God's revelation and knowledge, is the subject to whom Christian theology must continually refer. His name alone, Barth says, is the sole content of the New Testament confession.¹ In the singularity of his passion and resurrection, he is the end of all time.² Yet faith, as Barth recognizes, cannot count on "formulas" or "principles" which relate to the divinity and humanity of Christ, not even the "principle" of the Incarnation, in its attempt to describe God's revelation.³ In order to avoid the twin heresies of Docetism and Ebionism (the latter of which, Barth hastens to note, lived on in the thinking of Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Ritschl!), faith must hold two Christologies in dialectical relationship,⁴ without synthesizing them:

1) God's Word/Son is Jesus of Nazareth

2) Jesus of Nazarene is God's Word/Son

For Barth the name Jesus Christ is the confession

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I, 2 (1938), 15.

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I, 2 (1938), 14.

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I, 2 (1938), 14.

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I, 2 (1938), 23.

which maintains this dialectical unity and acknowledges that the confessor is squarely under the authority of God's revelation. Yet how can the reality of Jesus Christ have this power, the power to be the reality of God's revelation for man?⁵

In other connections we have seen various restatements of the same question: if there is an analogia created between God and man by virtue of God's action in Christ, in what manner does man apprehend and appropriate the analogia? If the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ is God's self-knowledge, what is the process by which this knowledge becomes man's knowledge, in man? The question, in its most general sense, is this: how does man receive the reality of revelation? At the risk of operating within the framework of another vestigium Trinitatis, Barth suggests that in the revelation of the Triune God "the Father represents the divine Who, the Son the divine What, and the Holy Spirit the divine How."⁶ As bald a rationalization as this is, it at least directs our attention to the appropriate area of dogmatics for the subjective understanding of revelation: the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Origin of Human Freedom

The question of human freedom as such is properly treated in Volume III of Barth's Dogmatics: The Doctrine of

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I, 2 (1938), 27.

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I, 2 (1938), 33.

Creation. Yet this more fully articulated understanding of man's freedom which Barth later presents (III, 1:1945; III, 2: 1948; III, 3:1950; III, 4: 1951) is grounded entirely in Barth's presentation of the subjective reality of God's⁷ revelation for man: the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Man comes to make the confession "Jesus is Lord", only by⁸ and through the work of the Holy Spirit. Man is free to make this assertion only to the degree that God's loving freedom becomes real to him in the Holy Spirit. This happens when the presence of God encounters man in his concrete existence, when all questioning dissolves before the Word of God. In the Holy Spirit, man's existence is determined at a definite and particular place in history; he is⁹ determined as a child of God. With Luther, Barth would list three specific "gifts" of the Spirit to man, or three essential determinations of human freedom which originate¹⁰ in the Holy Spirit:

- 1) The Holy Spirit gives (guarantees) man his freedom to participate in God's revelation.
- 2) The Holy Spirit gives man the instruction and guidance which man cannot give himself. This happens as man is freed to obey the scripture.
- 3) The Holy Spirit creates the possibility that man's language becomes testimony to the reality of Christ.

⁷ I, 2 (1938), 203; See also I, 1 (1932), 513.

⁸ I, 1 (1932), 513. ⁹ I, 1 (1932), 524.

¹⁰ I, 1 (1932), 518-20.

Each of these three gifts of the Holy Spirit must be understood in terms of the divinely-established readiness of man for the revelation of God: in a word, in terms of the gift of faith. In the Holy Spirit, Barth says, man receives the analogia fidei.¹¹ The Spirit adds to man the capability of faith, which is the freedom to become a recipient of revelation. Through the Spirit, we cry *Ἀβρά, ὁ Πατήρ* (Rom. 8.15, Gal. 4.6). Yet the activity of the Spirit in freeing man for faith does not remove man from or obviate the dilemma or dialectic of faith; man remains in the knowledge that faith is not his own possibility. In the sphere of human existence, the Holy Spirit establishes man as the possibility of his own redemption:¹² in other words, man is made radically free for the future, which is God's future.

Thus the Holy Spirit is seen by Barth as the divine self-impartation of God which 1) establishes man as a child of God, 2) freeing man from the closedness of his unfaith and 3) orienting man in relation to and toward the possibility of his own redemption from sin. In the grace of his Spirit, God establishes in man the knowledge of his own need for grace. As such, the Holy Spirit is the origin of all

¹¹
I, 1 (1932), 523.

¹²
I, 1 (1932), 529-30. The idea that man exists on the basis of his possibilities finds strong expression among the Existentialist philosophers, especially Martin Heidegger; in this regard see Being and Time (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 67-69, viz., Dasein as "Being-possible".

genuine human freedom (II Cor. 3.17).

3. Filioque

For Barth, the dogmatic assertion of the double procession of the Holy Spirit as found in the Western definition of the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan Creed is the basis and source of all Evangelische dogmatics. Simply stated, the filioque clause in the Creed is the confessional form in which the independence and divinity of the Holy Spirit is affirmed.¹³ In relation to the question of the Spirit within revelation, the issue is man and his presence at revelation. Even if the divinity of God the Father and the divinity of God the Son are affirmed, the danger of seeing revelation as an object at man's disposal remains--at the point where the Holy Spirit is not affirmed as being co-divine with the Father and the Son but is rather seen as a "creaturely force".¹⁴ If the Holy Spirit is a creature, this implies that man's response to the work of the Holy Spirit would be required to complete the act of revelation.¹⁵ This is the Subordinationist heresy. On the other hand, if the Spirit is seen as identical with Christ, then God's act of revelation would collapse into one of the objects of human cognition, viz., "the idea of Christ". This is the

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I, 1 (1932), 541-57.

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I, 1 (1932), 535.

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I, 1 (1932), 535. "For our relation to creatures and creaturely forces, even in circumstances most unfavorable to us, is after all a reciprocal one, a co-operation of freedom and necessity, a relation between one pole and its opposite."

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Modalist heresy. The divinity and uniqueness of the Spirit must be declared if man is to exist in the knowledge of his ultimate need for grace. Man's presence at God's¹⁷ revelation can only be in a position of submission.¹⁸

Barth perceives¹⁸ that the doctrine of the divinity of the Holy Spirit had to be positively settled before the question of grace could become the critical question in the West, making possible the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone (!). Without a clear picture of the implications of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, he concludes, modern Protestantism and its "natural theology"¹⁹ implies a reversion to the Ante-Nicene confusion.

From the credal reference to the Holy Spirit as "Lord Holy Spirit" (κύριος used adjectivally), Barth derives that the Spirit is the bearer of the Lordship of God. From the neuter character of the noun πνεῦμα he risks the assertion that the Spirit's "neutrality" implies his distinctness and relatedness to the Father and the Son, i.e., the "common factor" of their existence:²⁰ Lordship. In his interest to interpret the Creed, Barth engages here in a form of "word-mysticism" that is reminiscent of Heidegger's analysis of the "primitive force" of such Greek words as λόγος (Being and Time, p. 55-8).

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I, 1 (1932), 535.

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I, 1 (1932), 536.

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I, 1 (1932), 536.

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I, 1 (1932), 536.

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I, 1 (1932), 536.

In the "communion" which is his being with the Father and the Son as Lord, the Holy Spirit shares in creation as Creator Spirit; it is the Spirit, Barth believes, who sustains human life in its existence under the Word of God, hence the assertion "Lord, and giver of life".²¹

Of central importance is the third assertion of the Third Article: "...Qui ex Patre Filioque procedit", the filioque having been accepted into the liturgy of the West only as late as 1014.²² Kelly reports²³ that the interpolation of the term (viz., "...And from the Son") into the Constantinopolitan Creed must be dated to the occasion of the Council of Reccared at Toledo in 589, although the text recited at Toledo was probably without the filioque. At any rate the doctrine itself was seen as the fatal blow against the Arian heresy, the ideas of the double procession of the Holy Spirit having been advanced²⁴ courageously by Augustine centuries earlier.

As "proceeding from" God the Father, the Holy Spirit can only be God, a divine essence set apart from all creatures: a mode of the existence of God.²⁵ Thus it cannot be understood that the Spirit constitutes a separate revelation alongside the revelation of God's Word. There can be no "delimiting" of the modes of God's being

²¹ I, 1 (1932), 540. ²² I, 1 (1932), 534.
²³ J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds (New York: McKay, 1972), p. 362.
²⁴ Ibid., p. 358-9. ²⁵ I, 1 (1932), 541-2.

in themselves, outside their reality in revelation. Hence, as the Biblical witness attests, the Holy Spirit must be regarded as the Spirit of the Son as well as the Spirit of the Father; to isolate such passages as Jn. 15.26 as proof that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father alone is to deny the "full content" of revelation.²⁶ For Barth, the fulness of God's revelation consists that in the self-presentation of God as Father and Son, God presents himself a third time as the Holy Spirit--"The love which unites him in himself."²⁷ If the double procession of the Spirit is denied, then the full divinity (self-impartment) of God is likewise denied.

The effects of the denial or ignorance of the double procession of the Holy Spirit are nothing short of momentous. Luther, Barth says, could onesidedly emphasize God's justification of the sinner over against the Catholic doctrine as long as the divinity of the Holy Spirit was an unchallenged assumption; however, when the Neo-Protestant theologians picked up on the idea of justification, they lost sight of the divine claim upon man's freedom (vis-a-vis the divinity of the Holy Spirit).²⁸ The results of this error were the reversion to the old Catholic idea of analogy and the setting up of man as a parallel witness to revelation on the one hand, and the rise of the Historical-Critical Method on the other.²⁹ Thus Barth sees the

²⁶ I, 1 (1932), 549, i.e., taking into account esp. the Pauline witness.

²⁷ I, 1 (1932), 553.

²⁹ I, 2 (1938), 208-9.

²⁸ I, 2 (1938), 208-9.

whole of Neo-Protestant theology with its attendant programme of Biblical interpretation as the victim of one giant theological mistake: the denial of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The paraphrase might be playfully added: "If only they had understood their Creed!"

4. Spirit and Sacrament

The idea of the filioque in turn raises the question of the relationship between the Spirit and the Son from whom the Spirit proceeds. By what process does the objective reality/possibility of revelation become the subjective reality/possibility of revelation, in man? Beginning with a view to the parallelismus membrorum of certain Biblical passages,³⁰ Barth moves to a consideration of the "signs" in the subjective reality of revelation which are given by God from the objective reality of revelation. Such "signs" are determined in their creatureliness by the Word of God; divinely instituted, they imply no analogy between themselves and that to which they testify.³¹ In this line of argument, Barth seeks to describe the historicity of Jesus Christ as mediated by the Holy Spirit.

It is in no wise accidental that Barth chooses the Biblical "sign" of election as the first such "sign" to consider; election is for Barth the key Biblical doctrine for the whole understanding of man. With the backdrop of

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I, 2 (1938), 222.

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I, 2 (1938), 224.

the Old Testament picture of the election of Israel through Abraham, Jacob, Moses and the whole Hebrew covenant-history, the manifestation of Jesus Christ becomes the concrete reality of man's election. The primary manifestation of the sign of election, however, occurs through the activity of the Old Testament prophets--"Nothing but human", yet³² with the word of witness on their lips. In the sign, as it were, the concrete world is subsumed under the activity of God. As the Lord of creation, God sets up human institutions and practices which correspond with the objective reality of his revelation. As instruments of God's revelation in the human sphere, the signs are manifestations of man's readiness for God, part of the work of the Holy Spirit. Hence as the sign witnesses to the objective revelation of God, it merits the name "sacrament". The sacraments are both "sign" and "symbol" in that they rest upon the event to which they refer.

Yet the sacraments themselves as "means of grace"³³ are not what convinces man that he is a child of God; only revelation as such accomplishes this. The subjective world is not required to complete God's revelation; it is already included in it. This is due to the fact that God's objec-³⁴tive revelation does not occur apart from man.

Closely tied to Barth's understanding of sacrament

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I, 2 (1938), 226.

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I, 2 (1938), 238.

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I, 2 (1938), 232.

is his understanding of witness. All that men can do in recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit is to speak of it "in sheer repetition".³⁵ In the Spirit, the Word of God reaches to man and bears witness to itself. As the supreme New Testament witness to the person of Christ, John the Baptist is set directly within the sphere of the work of the Holy Spirit.³⁶

Again, Barth would seek a dialectic understanding of the idea of sacrament: as a sign set up in the concrete world as a subjective witness to the objective reality of Christ, the sacrament is the self-validation of the revelation of God. Only as it pierces the subjective sphere, is revelation objective.³⁷ In this way the sacrament can become a sort of "visual aid" or "image" of an ungodly world which has been attacked by the grace of God. In the creation of signs and sacraments, then, the work of the Holy Spirit is none other than the work of Christ (Rom. 5.5).³⁸

5. Religion

In the face of God's revelation, Barth says, religion must be understood as a problem.³⁹ This problem is nothing more than the problem of man in relation to God.⁴⁰ All religion, as human institution, stands under God's judgment upon its own sinfulness. In turn, the variety and scope

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I, 1 (1938), 239.
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I, 1 (1938), 239.
³⁹
I, 2 (1938), 280.

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I, 2 (1938), 231.
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I, 2 (1938), 241.
⁴⁰
I, 2 (1938), 283.

of religious practice in general, including countless parallels and analogies of Christian "religion" in particular, must be seen as the reflection of the hiddenness of God in the human sphere. It is the nature of God the Father that he remains hidden from man. Thus as in Barth's system man must be understood paradoxically or dialectically in relation to revelation, religion must be understood likewise.

The revelation of God is actually the presence of God and therefore the hiddenness of God in the world of human religion.⁴¹

At this point Barth makes a surprising "concession" to his old teacher Adolph von Harnack and the "history-of-religions" school which he spearheaded, yet one which follows nonetheless from the assertion that religion is human and therefore fallen: in short, the mere assertion that the Christian religion is a "revealed religion" and therefore the steward of a higher "religious truth" than other world religions will not deliver the Christian religion⁴² from the same uncertainty that characterizes the others. We shall not have recourse, Barth says, to even the "idea of revelation" or any other religious idea. The participation of man in the objective reality of God's revelation is denied when the possibility of misunderstanding or ignoring the revelation is denied.⁴³ The claim that Christian

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I, 2 (1938), 282.

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I, 2 (1938), 283.

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I, 2 (1938), 283.

religion is a "genuine religion of revelation" and the attempt to align such a claim with the Biblical witness, which originated in the theories of Van Til and Buddeus⁴⁴ in the early 18th Century, is symptomatic of the Neo-Protestant movement of the 18th and 19th Centuries. By the time of Ritschl and Troelsch the focus had shifted almost entirely away from revelation to religion. With this history of "religionism" as a backdrop, Barth says, R. Seeburg could go so far as to suggest (1925) that it might be better to write a philosophy of religion instead of a dogmatics.⁴⁵ Such a "secular" position on the relation of religion to revelation was manifested most formidably for Barth in the writings of the man whom he had formerly called "a dreadnought on our side and against our opponents," Friedrich Gogarten.⁴⁶

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I, 2 (1938), 288. Buddeus, although he posits man's "original knowledge" of himself and God as the pre-supposition of religio naturalis, correctly stated that religio naturalis must give way to revelation as the source of man's salvation.

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I, 2 (1938), 291.

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The quotation from Barth dates to October 27, 1920, in a letter to Eduard Thurneysen in Karl Barth, Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence 1914-1925 (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), p. 53.

Barth's early positive appraisal of Gogarten stemmed from the publication of the latter's ground-shaking article "Zwischen den Zeiten" ("Between the Times") which appeared in Christliche Welt, XXXIV (1920), col. 374-8. In the article Gogarten had compared the post-World War I situation on Germany with the eschatological "interim" between the life of Jesus and the end of the world which Schweitzer had observed in the writings of the New Testament, so that the

By the time that Volume I, Part Two of Church Dogmatics was published, Gogarten had already retracted his endorsement of the so-called "German Christian" movement.⁴⁷ It was perhaps with deference to Gogarten's serious illness in the year 1938 that Barth did not mention his old ally in the contemporary volume. Rather, by this time the problem of "religion" versus revelation was for Barth a much bigger issue than one which might be circumscribed by a controversy between two theologians. The theological damage which made the German Lutheran alliance with the National Socialists possible, Barth apologizes, was a damage which had already been done by the time of "doughty" old Van Til and Buddeus, a damage which can ultimately be traced to the Protestant misunderstanding of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Thus the theological alternative of Kulturprotestantismus, the enemy against which the whole "dialectic theology" circle had aligned itself in the early Twenties, represented the negative side of the "either-or" which faces every inquiry into the problem of religion in theology: either religion is accurately recognized as being utterly and wholly at the disposal of God's revelation, or revela-

present was seen as the time which belonged neither to the past nor the future.

For Barth's critique of Gogarten at the time of the publication of the Church Dogmatics half-volume in 1932, see I, 1, 141-9.

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For a good summary of Gogarten's career, see Larry Shiner, The Secularization of History (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), esp. p. 194-224.

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tion is denied.

In nuce, Barth affirms that modern theology has gradually lost contact with the Christological dogma of the early church.⁴⁹ This loss of contact made possible the whole range of "anthropological theologies" in the 18th through 19th Centuries. Only as a revealed unity of God and man in the Christ-event, Barth says, are we able to understand man in relation to God; in turn, the imperfect and incomplete unity of God and human religion can only be understood on the basis of the dogmatic assertion of the assumptio carnis.⁵⁰ As God assumed, determined and disposed of man in Christ (Cf. Chapter One, n.18 above), so religion is abolished in revelation.

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In turn, religion must be understood as unbelief, nothing more than the human attempt to anticipate God's will and action. In light of the crucifixion of Christ, all religious groups are called into accountability, and must withstand the charge of apostasy (Acts 14.15f, 17.22f). Yet no mere human attitude of criticism or "skepticism" toward religion, e.g., through a "phenomenology of religion",⁵² must be confused with revelation. Religion is per se impossible and self-contradictory as sinful man's attempt to create a "correspondence" divine action and human practice,

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I, 2 (1938), 295.
⁵⁰
I, 2 (1938), 297.
⁵²
I, 2 (1938), 314.

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I, 2 (1938), 297.
⁵¹
I, 2 (1938), 297-300.

where there can be no correspondence.

Two additional attempts to accommodate the impos-⁵³sibility of religion are found in mysticism and atheism. Mysticism, as Barth considers it, consists in the making peace with religion by recognizing that all outward religious practice is but an abstraction of the "spiritual dimension"; yet mysticism cannot survive apart from the dogmatics and ethics of religion which are, as it were, grist for its mill. On the other hand, atheism in its usual form (secularism⁵⁴) amounts to little more than a parroting and elaboration of the negation which stands at the heart of all religion (see above). At the most basic level, both mysticism and atheism in their respective "rich" and "sterile" negations of religion are merely satellite phenomenae which reflect the basic problem of religion--the problem of man before God:

If a religion died, it died because of the victory of another religion, not because of the more fundamental attack of mysticism or atheism.⁵⁵

Notwithstanding the "acute and chronic sickness" which lies at the heart of all religion, the sickness for which mysticism and atheism are but secondary or tertiary symptoms, the possibility for "true religion" does exist: for Barth, "true religion" as a paradoxical possibility is a confession of faith, just as is the justification of

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I, 2 (1938), 318.

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I, 2 (1938), 323.

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I, 2 (1938), 321.

believers. The possibility that Christianity or any other religion can become a "true religion" (in Christian dogmatics, viz., the doctrine of sanctification) begins at the point where God, working through the Holy Spirit, makes men aware of the impossibility of religion and of their unequivocal need for grace. Only as faith, is true religion possible.⁵⁶

As it stands wholly under the paradox of its own existence, Christian religion must continually abandon all claims to absolute truth or certainty. As in the case of the man who, having been disposed of by God's grace in revelation and who as such can only live on the basis of a future possibility of his own existence, so the church. In relation to God and in turn to all other religions, Christianity can only live under the Pauline *ὡς μή* (I Cor. 7.29) in its unmediated radicalness. There can be no resisting or struggling against the truth-claims of other religions. By the grace of God there is a unique power⁵⁷ which Christianity has as the "religion of revelation", and it is a power which dwells only in weakness (II Cor. 12.10).

There can be no doubt that when Barth speaks here of the "power" of Christianity, its possibility as a "true religion", even going so far as to use such unfortunate expressions as "the religion of revelation", he has stepped or leaped from the negative side of the paradox of the

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I, 2 (1938), 331.

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I, 2 (1938), 333.

existence of religion over to the positive side. He avowedly took a similar leap from the earthly signs which God's objective reality gives to its subjective reality (cf. n.26 above) to the existence of man in and under God's subjective reality.⁵⁸ In argument, this represents the completion of the phenomenological procedure which Barth uses extensively. Yet more fundamental to Barth's programme here is what might be called the "referral value" of such secondary realities as the conviction of certain men, the possibility of "true" Christian religion, etc.: as long as there is no denial of the mysterium of the Incarnation, it should be right and proper to turn one's focus toward the positive side of the paradox. If the possibility of such a shift is denied, the work of the Holy Spirit as subjective reality and possibility of the knowledge of God is denied by association.⁵⁹ Yet, e.g., contra Gogarten, the reality of human community (viz., the other man who has ceased to be in isolation from his fellow-men⁶⁰) can never be the proper starting-place for theology.

It must be re-emphasized that no mere self-conscious doubting or criticism from within the Christian religion will be commensurate with the mediating of divine judgment (Cf., again, Gogarten's article Gericht oder Skepsis? of

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I, 2 (1938), 232.

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I, 1 (1932), 145.

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I, 2 (1938), 233.

1937, in which Gogarten articulated against Barth the same essential criticism which Troeltsch had leveled against Gogarten's Zwischen den Zeiten article sixteen years earlier: that a "theology of crisis" runs the risk of confusing an aesthetic contrast, like the contrast between finite and infinite, with a genuine manifestation of God's judgment over against man or culture⁶¹). The event in which the truth-claim of Christianity is stripped away is the decisive act of God's Holy Spirit. As such, Barth says, the place where the knowledge of the truth of the Christian religion survives must be a "Peniel" (Gen. 32.22ff), a place where man stands as an unqualified enemy of grace.⁶²

6. Election

The fact that the Christian religion among other religions does not possess an autonomous reality or claim to truth, coupled with the real possibility that Christianity can become a true religion of revelation, Barth insists, refers back to the Holy Spirit as the bearer of God's election.⁶³ Barth is willing to affirm the idea of a creatio continua insofar as it interprets the electio continua,

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Theodore Runyon, "Friedrich Gogarten and Current Trends in Theology", Drew Gateway, XXXVII (spring 1967), 122. Troeltsch's article "An Apple from the Tree of Kirkegaard" originally appeared in Christliche Welt, XXXV (1921), col. 186-9, and is translated in Robinson, p. 311-16.

62

I, 2 (1938), 338-9.

63

I, 2 (1938), 344-6.

God's justification and sanctification of believers through Christ and his Spirit.⁶⁴ Only in the forgiveness of God is the Christian religion able to know itself in terms of its possibilities. The Christian religion and the man who comprises it live solely on the basis of the forgiveness which has been made real and available in the name Jesus Christ. At every moment the closedness of man and religion toward God stands in tension to the reality of God's forgiveness. Yet even in this relationship of tension and opposition, Barth affirms, the Holy Spirit is at work⁶⁵ creating correspondence where there can be none. Only as immanence, in the fallen and disfigured world of man, is God's transcendence made real to man. Here Barth again reminds us that the sacramental model is important for an understanding of religion; even though the practices and idiosyncrasies of human religion are inappropriate, incomplete and at bottom only demonstrative of unbelief, God has chosen on behalf of man in the act of Christ.

The Christian religion is the sacramental area created by the Holy Spirit, in which the God whose Word became flesh continues to speak through the sign of his revelation.⁶⁶

The name Jesus Christ, the "ultimate Word of God",⁶⁷ solely and perfectly constitutes the election of Christian religion.⁶⁸ Barth's understanding of election is thus

⁶⁴
I, 2 (1938), 348.

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I, 2 (1938), 359.

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I, 2 (1938), 360.

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I, 2 (1938), 358.

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I, 2 (1938), 24.

radically based in the reality of the Son as the revelation of the Father. His election is man's election, and the election of man's religion. It cannot be doubted that with this interpretation of the Incarnation as the basis of election and the "first sacrament" toward which all sacraments (as the articles of "true religion") refer and from which they are created, Barth sees in the work of Christ through his life, death and resurrection a divine act of "substitution" for man's fallenness from and closedness toward grace. In the first and last measures, it is Christ alone who makes God's grace possible and real for man.

Jesus...accepted God's grace in our place and therefore rendered to God the obedience which we continually refuse.⁶⁹

7. Baptism

We now turn briefly to a much later page in the history of Barth's Church Dogmatics--namely the fragment of Volume IV, Part 4 (The Doctrine of Reconciliation) added in 1967. It must be quickly noted that Barth's position by the time of the publication of the Reconciliation volumes (1953 and the years following) is in many ways materially inconsistent with his position of

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II, 1 (1940), 152.

the first two volumes; however, the essay on "Baptism with the Holy Spirit" (IV, 4, p. 3-40), does provide a useful summary of Barth's idea of sanctification and as such can serve as the guidepost to our next major area of concern, the positive application of Barth's doctrines of God and the Holy Spirit.

Barth's answer to the question of man's participation in God's revelation, as we have seen, is an answer which confesses the continuous election (justification) and sanctification of man through the Holy Spirit who is the divine Spirit of the Father and the Son. For Barth, again, it is not wrong to continue from the assertion that man does participate in revelation, if the reality of revelation in Christ is the nexus from which and to which all statements refer. In this connection, Barth lists three major views of the process by which man becomes faithful (i.e., a participant in revelation) to God. They are:

- 1) The Roman Catholic view, which asserts that man becomes faithful through the infusion of supernatural powers to him by God.
- 2) The Neo-Protestant view, which asserts that man

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E.g., see IV, 2 (1955) in which Barth's earlier positive understanding of the concept of "neighbor", in relation to the Christian community, has been seriously weakened. Where Barth could say at an earlier stage (I, 2, p. 418-30) that the neighbor and his claim upon man is constitutive of the Christian community whether or not the neighbor confesses Christ, he will now say (IV, 4, p. 808-20) that outside of the baptised community, "friendship" is all that God requires between man and neighbor.

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IV, 4 (1967), 5-8.

becomes faithful through the fulfillment of his religious and moral impulses. A revival of Pelagianism, Barth says, this view is also more currently found in the so-called "theological existentialism" (!).

- 3) The view of Melanchthon and Lutheran orthodoxy, which asserts that man becomes faithful solely through God's judgment and grace, but man remains unaltered in the process.

Each of these three views, Barth summarizes,⁷² in its own peculiar over-emphasis contributed to the life and rigidity of the other two. Each one misses the essential scriptural insight that through God's freedom man becomes free to be and do that which he could not be or do before.⁷³ Stated differently, none of the above-mentioned views deals seriously with sanctification as God's possibility for man.

This constitutes Barth's starting-point for an understanding of the Pauline references to dying and rising with Christ, (esp. Rom. 6), and other scriptural indications of the "new reality" which God gives man in Christ: a reality not given on the basis of an existing previous orientation or capacity (being) on the part of man, but a reality wholly and totally given from outside man and concretely appropriated by man, in faith. Not even human death is the constitutive factor for man's participation, only God's gift.⁷⁴ Over against Bultmann who sees man as appropriating Christ's crucifixion in the obedience of faith, Barth would state that no human action whatsoever, not even the decision for

⁷² IV, 4 (1967), 5.

⁷³ IV, 4 (1967), 7.

⁷⁴ IV, 4 (1967), 16.

obedience, is necessary to complete the movement from God's faithfulness to man's corresponding faithfulness which occurred decisively in the history of Jesus Christ.⁷⁵ To attempt to "de-mythologize" the reconciling event of Christ's death and resurrection is, in effect, to try to add a human "word" upon the situation which assists God's Word: an unnecessary attempt, and at bottom an impossible one.

For Barth, the Holy Spirit unites man with the objective and effective "history of salvation" (Heilsgeschichte)⁷⁶ which is present in the history of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit brings about the decisive change in man (faith), and the knowledge in man of the saving work of Jesus Christ. To summarize, the one disclosure of God's history to all men in Christ's resurrection and the opening of specific men in that history by the Holy Spirit, is what the New Testament refers to as baptism with the Holy Ghost.⁷⁷

⁷⁵
IV, 4 (1967), 17.
⁷⁷
IV, 4 (1967), 30.

⁷⁶
IV, 4 (1967), 26-7.

Chapter Three

THE POSITIVE APPLICATION OF THE DOCTRINE

1. Obedience

For Barth, the Christian life as a life of obedience is a direct interpretation of the Pauline baptismal formula $\epsilon\nu \text{ } \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omega$ ¹. The concrete Christian life of works must be dealt with if the grace of the Holy Spirit is to be taken seriously, not separate from or a priori to the proper subject-matter of theology, but as a consequence of the work of the Holy Spirit which has solely a referential validity (see p. 44 above). In the Spirit (we must add, the Spirit of Christ) man can only testify that God has found them and created them in his revelation. The "definition" of human life which is created by the Spirit must be a negative definition in relation to the being and doing of man: as elected by God, the Christian is isolated from all states of his being except the state of seeking God in love² and prevented from concealing his election by his actions³. The Biblical concepts for this new being and doing of man, Barth observes, are love and praise, respectively.

Thus as an elected participant in the love of God

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I, 2 (1938), 367.

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I, 2 (1938), 370.

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I, 2 (1938), 370.

which is directed toward him, man becomes oriented toward his highest and best possibility of being, being-in-love.⁴ Although the possibility of being-in-love, Barth says, begins at the moment when man encounters his own weakness and despair, the life of being-in-love in no way limits or impairs man's full humanity.⁵ Barth would affirm that in love, the children of God exist in an analogia relationis with Christ which corresponds to the nature of the Incarnation.⁶ Contra Aquinas, there can be no natural capacity in man for the love of God; love can only be understood as the free gift of grace, given through the Holy Spirit. Also Barth rejects Hegel's "Romantic" idea of love (viz., "losing oneself in another") as well as Ritschl's "social" conception of love (viz., "promoting a like-minded person to achieve his true and highest destiny") as anthropological and bourgeois distortions of the character of love as divine gift.⁷

The scriptural key to Barth's understanding of the Holy Spirit's work in love is the Synoptic reportage of the love command of Jesus (Mt. 22.37; Mk. 12.29f; Lk. 10.27): "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind (and strength)." This is the Biblical locus classicus for the idea of human obedience as Jn. 1.14 was the locus classicus for the idea of the Incarnation.⁸ It

⁴ I, 2 (1938), 372.

⁶ Cf. I, 2 (1938), 374-5.

⁸ I, 2 (1938), 380-1.

⁵ I, 2 (1938), 374.

⁷ I, 2 (1938), 376-7.

is solely on the basis of his obedience to this command that man comes into proximity with his true possibility of being-in-love. Human love is a reality and possibility willed by God and fulfilled by the Holy Spirit, that is, God's willing that there be a correspondence between man and himself. At this point Barth finds himself one with Kirkegaard on the subject of the love command:⁹ to disobey the command of God would be to deny the very being of man. Love, as it is God's love imparted to man, has an eschatological significance for man's being as well, an "accepting, confirming and grasping"¹⁰ of man's future which rests in God. Hence, Barth sees, Jesus' promise of perfection in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5.48) follows as a correlate of the love command.

For Barth, man's obedience to God's revelation as actualized in the Holy Spirit creates in human existence a sacramental correspondence between God's activity and man's activity.¹¹ As the sign of the elected human existence points to the reality of God, so human works are imparted with the character of witnessing to God.¹² At this point, we have moved to the second "determination" of human freedom by the Holy Spirit, that is, the preventing man from concealing his election. God has determined

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I, 2 (1938), 386.

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I, 2 (1938), 389.

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Cf. I, 2 (1938), 401, 429; also p. 32-3 above.

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I, 2 (1938), 401.

man in love and for service.¹³ Interestingly and quite in keeping with Barth's understanding of the Christian life as a sacramental reality corresponding to the Incarnation, he sees the human praise of God (witnessing to God's electing love) as the obedient response to Jesus' second Great Commandment, the command "to love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22.38; Mk. 12.31; Lk. 10.27b). The command to love one's neighbor is not separable from the command to love God, yet the two "loves" are not identical. The first Great Commandment assumes (presupposes) the electing love of God, while the second Great Commandment assumes (presupposes) human self-love (an "illusion"--see I, 2, p. 388.). As Barth hears scripture speaking "always and exclusively from the standpoint of his (man's) sin and reconciliation",¹⁴ so the two different presuppositions of the two Great Commandments are seen to reflect this same dual view of man. The two fit together in correspondence with a paradoxical understanding of man as saved and yet a sinner, as we observe the concept of self-love emerge in Barth's argument as a negative factor, an illusion, a contradiction that is nonetheless a human reality.¹⁵ Thus the words "as thyself" pronounce God's judgment upon human self-centeredness and closedness which, although pierced by God's reconciling love, still persists. Human self-love is for Barth the manifestation in the sphere of ordinary

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II, 2 (1945), 511.

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I, 2 (1938), 404.

¹⁵
I, 2 (1938), 450ff.

human consciousness of man's most real need for the miracle of grace, namely that "he is in a position to cover up and hide from himself this need of his":¹⁶ in a word, original sin. Self-love is a constant reminder to man of his need for grace, even as he is able to stand in the reconciliation of the Holy Spirit.

The only positive meaning of "as thyself" is, then, that we are commanded to love our neighbor as those who love themselves, i.e., as those who in reality do not love, as the sinners that we are.¹⁷

In light of such an implication, the only way man can obey the command to love one's neighbor is in an attitude of courageous humility which abandons all foresight;¹⁸ in short, man must risk loving his neighbor. In this attitude of being totally at the disposal of God's will, in the full recognition of the fragmentation and the fall-
 enness of his own existence, man obeys the commandments to love and his life can then become a witness to God.

2. Neighborhood and Brotherhood

Who is the neighbor whom man is commanded by God to love? For Barth he is the fellow human who is posited as such by God¹⁹ and who exists in primary and true form²⁰ as the bearer and representative of God's compassion.

Barth relates an interesting little homily on the Lukan

¹⁶
 II, 1 (1940), 130.
¹⁸
 I, 2 (1938), 453.
²⁰
 I, 2 (1938), 416.

¹⁷
 I, 2 (1938), 450.
¹⁹
 I, 2 (1938), 415.

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version of the pericope of the Samaritan, emphasizing that man must recognize that he is the one "fallen among thieves" and lying helpless by the road, not merely the neutral observer of an event which presumably teaches him something about being a neighbor. Conclusively, the neighbor is the person who shows mercy to the stranded traveler, that and nothing else. Understood in this way, the neighbor becomes the person in whom the reconciliation already effected in Jesus Christ is symbolized: a representative of the humanity of Christ.

...Our neighbor in his distress is a reminder to us and the occasion and object of our proper worship of God.²²

In the New Testament, Barth reports, the term "brother" ($\alpha\delta\epsilon\lambda\phi\omicron\varsigma$) has almost completely replaced the term "neighbor" ($\pi\lambda\acute{\eta}\sigma\iota\omicron\varsigma$) and must be understood Christologically. The brother or neighbor confronts us with Christ in the fullness of his human suffering, "with the poverty, the homelessness, the scars, the corpse, at the grave of Jesus Christ."²³ Finally, the brother/neighbor reveals to man his own resistance to grace, his hidden weakness and enmity before God, and in this process the brother/neighbor acquires the character of a sacrament.²⁴

Even though the love of one's neighbor represents man's true obedience to the love of God, it can in no way be construed as a sufficient "work" of man. Barth refutes

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I, 2 (1938), 417-19.

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I, 2 (1938), 428.

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I, 2 (1938), 427.

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I, 2 (1938), 435.

the idea, coming from Bultmann and before him from Ritschl, that there is no human obedience apart from the love of neighbor.²⁵ On the one hand, such concrete devotional practices as prayer, meditation and worship must be properly recognized as legitimate acts of obedience; on the other hand, man is forbidden from retreating into a "religiosity" of private activity. The claim of the neighbor in its sacramental character is an effective symbol of the radicalness of God's love over against man. The claim of the "thou" which occurs in the work of the Holy Spirit is a claim which constitutes the "I" who stands as its opposite pole.

Although it is Christological rather than anthropological in its derivation, Barth's understanding of the fellowship of man and neighbor bears considerable resemblance to the "Thou-I" relation which appears as a philosophical construct in the writings of Gogarten, emerging as early as the publication of Religion Weither in 1917.²⁶ In his correspondence of October 7, 1922 with Eduard Thurneysen,²⁷ however, Barth had dismissed Gogarten's idea of the Thou-I (by several years the predecessor of Martin Buber's celebrated distinction between the I-Thou and I-it relationships) as "speculative".

To repeat, in Barth's understanding of the "out-

²⁵ I, 2 (1938), 434.

²⁷ Smart, p. 110.

²⁶ Shiner, p. 194.

pouring" (work) of the Holy Spirit, the neighbor is a constitutive reality in the doctrine of man before God. The neighbor as posited by God is not at man's disposal. Man has no provision to enforce the human love of God upon his neighbor; that would merely weaken his own obedience to God by reducing it to the character of a human "bargain".²⁸ In his unqualified givenness before man, the neighbor cannot be "predicted" or "postulated", not even on the basis of an understanding of human need.

The plight of man does not begin or consist only in what we can see. It may just as well be hidden behind an aspect of soundness, strength and victory, as revealed in sickness, weakness and defeat.²⁹

Love for one's neighbor, then, is not pity, approval, respect, friendship, sympathy or any other real or imaginary human feeling. For Barth the love for one's neighbor is grounded in no "worthiness" or "unworthiness" on the part of the neighbor; that love is the Law, the Law that is fulfilled in the Gospel of Christ's reconciling work among men.

3. Witness

As we have already seen (Chapter One, n.31 and 32 above), the figure of John the Baptist concretizes for Barth the reality and necessity of the sign of witnessing as part of the Work of the Holy Spirit. In the locus classicus for the New Testament idea of witness, we have

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I, 2 (1938), 439.

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I, 2 (1938), 428.

a compact statement of the Christian doctrine of sanctification: "He must increase, I must decrease." (Jn. 3.30). Only as a "voice" speaking in and of the name Jesus Christ is human witness actualized. However, Barth sees that true witness as man's praise of God³⁰ must nonetheless be a genuinely human activity in the Holy Spirit's work of impartation and attestation; otherwise the idea of human participation in God's revelation would reduce to Luther's "Christomonist" idea that man is only a channel through³¹ which the grace of God flows into his creation.

Barth is eager to offer specific suggestions for the existence and structure of authentic human witness. First, there will be no witness or only a false witness when man deals on the one hand with his own misery or need and on the other hand with those experiences in which he³² perceives a removal or alleviation of that need. The help that God provides for man is a self-evident help, and through the Holy Spirit man's existence is established as a sign which points to that help. Second, true witness consists in the concrete and symbolic assistance that man gives to his neighbor, concrete in the sense of being an

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I, 2 (1938), 440.

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See IV, 4 (1967), 19. This idea, which Barth wishes to avoid, may be characterized as a "subjectivism from above", as compared with the equally dangerous "subjectivism from below", i.e., an anthropological position such as Ritschl's.

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I, 2 (1938), 447.

actual effort to meet a current need and symbolic in the sense of signifying that by the grace of God there is a limit to that need.³³ Third, true witness involves the "evangelical attitude" on the part of the human witness, that is, an attitude of open confidence in the will of God as "already" in Jesus Christ and "not yet" in the Holy Spirit.³⁴ To borrow a phrase from Nietzsche, "the redeemed should look redeemed."³⁵ For Barth, the only possible true Christian witness occurs in the human confession of the name Jesus Christ, "the sum of the Gospel", a thoroughgoing coming-to-grips with the problem of man before God. The serious matter of man's acceptance and celebration of God's revelation for him, *κατὰ ὅλον*, is a reminder of the unity of Word and deed in the Incarnation and in turn an acknowledgment of the character of human existence.³⁶

4. Communio Sanctorum

As the church (Kirche) of the Christian religion, the church stands under the judgment of God upon all religion (Chapter Two, Section 4 above). It is totally provisional in character,³⁷ subject to the historical and

³³ I, 2 (1938), 447.

³⁵ I, 2 (1938), 449.

³⁷ IV, 2 (1955), 614.

³⁴ I, 2 (1938), 447.

³⁶ I, 2 (1938), 450.

cultural forces which perpetrate the abandoning of religions and the awakening of new forms and practices. As such, the existence of the church is characterized by sin.³⁸ The primary form that this sin takes is manifested when the church attempts to represent itself rather than the goal which God has created for it--the sanctification of all human existence in the Spirit of Christ.³⁹ For Barth, the church (Kirche) is the "true church" (Gemeinde) only in its function of preserving and upbuilding the community which confesses Jesus Christ--in its Credal formulation, as the communio sanctorum.⁴⁰ Communion (that is, "the common movement towards the same union on the basis of an existing union"⁴¹) takes place in the power and activity of the Holy Spirit.

In order to be the confessing community, the church must attest the Gospel of man's sin and God's reconciliation. As a present reality which exists only on the basis of its future possibility, the community is a sign which points to the περιχώρησις within the Trinity: through the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God and the community are one.⁴² On this Christological basis, Barth says, the upbuilding (actualization) of the community occurs as there is a continual openness to the renewal of the community by the Holy Spirit, a readiness for the

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IV, 2 (1955), 622.

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IV, 2 (1955), 641.

⁴²
IV, 2 (1955), 658.

³⁹
IV, 2 (1955), 620-2.

⁴¹
IV, 2 (1955), 641.

"utter novelty and strangeness" of God's plan for man's sanctification.⁴³ The "horizontal" (numerical) dimension of the church's growth is an empty and abstract dimension which by itself reveals nothing about the growth of the communio sanctorum; if the church seeks to grow in numbers of adherents alone, its mission to the world becomes mere propaganda.⁴⁴

The true and authentic growth of the Christian community "will continually exalt the lowly, enrich the poor, give joy to the sad and make heroes of the feeble."⁴⁵ As the community upheld and carried forward by the Holy Spirit, the communio sanctorum can only live and bear witness to the full divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ.

In relation to the full force of Barth's understanding of the communio sanctorum (which does not differ fundamentally from the position developed by the young Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Sanctorum Communio, Eine dogmatische Untersuchung zur Sociologie der Kirche, 1930⁴⁶) the term "confessing church" must be understood as containing a redundancy: if the church is the church, it already exists in the full confession of Christ. Yet this redundancy in its positive sense, it seems, must have served to heighten the polemical impact of the so-called "Confessing Synod" of the German Evangelical Church against the "German Christians" at the outset of the German church struggle.

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IV, 2 (1955), 653.

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IV, 2 (1955), 650.

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IV, 2 (1955), 646.

⁴⁶
IV, 2 (1955), 641.

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The Barmen Declaration of May 1934 concretized the key issue of "confession" within that struggle. Yet, as Barth reports, the real target of the second resolution at Barmen was natural theology in all its more or less energetic forms.⁴⁸ Only by unmasking the contradiction at the heart of the concept and history of "Christian natural theology" could the contradiction of the "German Christians" be decisively stated. As we have already noted, Barth understood the rise of natural theology in terms of a conscious or unconscious denial of the divinity of the Holy Spirit as it was confessed in the 1014 text of the Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Creed. Hence the Reformed-Evangelical Synod at Barmen with its attack on the natural theology that lay above, behind and beyond the "German error" of 1933, self-consciously confessed the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Following a quotation of Eph. 4.15-16, the third Article of the Barmen Declaration⁴⁹ reads:

The Christian church is the community of brethren, in which Jesus Christ presently works in the word and sacraments through the Holy Spirit. With her faith as well as her obedience, with her message as well as her ordinances, she has to witness in the midst of the world of sin as the church of forgiven

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There was an earlier Synod held at Barmen in January 3-4, 1934 which produced a confessional statement of the Reformed church alone. Barth composed this earlier statement. See Karl Barth, The German Church Conflict (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), p. 25ff, esp. p. 25, n.2.

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II, 1 (1940), 175-6.

49

John H. Leith (ed) Creeds of the Churches (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963), p. 521.

sinners that she is his alone, that she lives and wishes to live only by his comfort and his counsel in expectation of his appearance...
(emphasis added)

We repudiate the false teaching that the church can turn over the form of her message and ordinances at will or according to some dominant ideological and political convictions.

The first paragraph quoted above is a confessional formula on the nature of the communio sanctorum as Barth understands it. The passage fairly resounds with the key ideas of the positive application of the Barthian doctrine of the Holy Spirit: faith, forgiveness, witness, obedience, sacraments. As a specific instant in the history of the German church struggle, the Barmen Declaration must be understood as an authentic witness of the Christian community to the Lordship of Christ alone, in his Holy Spirit. As a phenomenon in the history of orthodoxy and heresy, the Barmen Declaration confessed the full divinity of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity over against the "Arianism, Pelagianism and idolatry"⁵⁰ of the German Christian position in particular and, by association, denied the general possibility of a Christian politico-religious state as such.

To briefly return to Barth's treatment of the communio sanctorum in the later Church Dogmatics, we note two categories of "dangers" which the upholding of the Christian community faces:⁵¹ first, the "danger from without", characterized either by hatred toward the church on the part of society or by its "tolerance" of the church; and second, the

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Barth, The German Church Conflict, p. 16.

⁵¹

IV, 2 (1955), 660-8.

much greater "danger from within", characterized either by sacralization ("self-glorification", the primary manifestation of sin in religion--see above, n.38) or by secularization. It is upon this last "danger" to the true church that we now turn our attention.

5. The Problem of Secularization

By the time that Barth published Volume IV, Part 2 of his Church Dogmatics (1955), the term "secularization" had really become the watchword of the theology of Friedrich Gogarten.⁵² It was upon the assertion that the church must keep up its dialogue with culture that Gogarten had set the distinctiveness of his own position over against that of Barth and all the "sogennante dialektische Theologie" group. Gogarten, in the article Gericht oder Skepsis? (1937) had explained his decision to side with the German Christians in 1933 (rescinded shortly thereafter) on the grounds that he "saw the ecclesiastical opposition (i.e., Barth) driving the church into an 'independence' which would harden it in the spiritual⁵³ habitus of nineteenth century bourgeois individualism."

For Barth secularization describes the process by which the church tries to be something other than the com-

52

See Shiner, p. 196. Shiner notes that the two books Die Verkuendigung Jesu Christi and Die Kirche in der Welt, both written in the late Forties, are most expressive in showing this development.

53

Quoted in Shiner, p. 213-4.

munio sanctorum: "a world church, a national church, a state church."⁵⁴ Secularization happens when the church unselfconsciously "baptizes" cultural or ideological nouvelles as its own; this constituted the "error" of the German Christians who would eventually ally themselves with Nazism. The church, Barth insists, must exist in self-conscious independence from the state, and in turn

Christians would, in point of fact, become enemies of any state if, when the state threatens their freedom, they did not resist or if they concealed their resistance.⁵⁵

Thus Barth is also interested in the dialogue between church and culture; indeed, so far as it grows out of the confessional paragraph which precedes it, the "We repudiate..." statement quoted above from the Barmen Declaration is a piece of that dialogue. Though its method is negative, the actual dialogue is positive--a positive effort to state the relationship between the communio sanctorum and its worldly environment.

We must take seriously Barth's indication that secularization is a danger which the true church faces from within. In other words, the "principalities and powers" of culture will always present the church with the temptation to be something other than the church, and

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IV, 2 (1955), 668.

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Karl Barth, "Church and State", in his Community, State and Church: Three Essays by Karl Barth (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), p. 139. Original: Rechtfertigung und Recht ["Justification and Justice"] (Theologische Studien, 1; Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1938).

that is simply "culture being culture". The real problem lies in whether or not the church will allow itself to make such a rapprochement to culture.

For Barth a key example of the secularization of the church can be found by tracing the evolution of the Protestant hymn.⁵⁶ This is no idle comparison; the praise of God in human worship must be understood in terms of man's readiness for God in the Holy Spirit (See above). Barth begins, of course, with Luther, who in his own hymn-composition worked from Biblical texts or texts from the early church in all but a few instances. In keeping with this solid adherence to the "faith of the church", Luther's hymn-texts lack all emphasis upon the emotional state of the subject.⁵⁷ This austerity and confessional quality of Luther's hymns would be almost completely contradicted by the "God-Pleasing Reform" led by Jacob Spener in 1675. Yet the reform movement of Pietism which Spener spear-headed had actually begun nearly a century earlier, with the growing hymnic references to the "soul", the "I", the "We"--in short, the subject in all its forms as a second sphere of interest alongside the divine sphere.⁵⁸ By the time that Pietism reached its height in the mid-18th Century, the subjective element in the hymn-text has been completely filled out with the whole exuberant "Christian life" and all its attendant emotions.⁵⁹ Barth remarks that

⁵⁶
I, 2 (1938), 250-65.
⁵⁸
I, 2 (1938), 253.

⁵⁷
I, 2 (1938), 253.
⁵⁹
I, 2 (1938), 254.

even in this period there can be found in the hymns statements of Biblical and reformed confession, yet

...On the whole participation in the singing of these hymns implies a congregation which is highly self-impelled, highly self-activating and highly self-exalted, and no longer...the congregation of Luther which is moved simply by hearing the word in faith. It is a congregation which has grown far more godly, which makes far greater demands on itself.⁶⁰

Concomitant with the 18th Century exaltation of the subject in the hymn was the removal or extensive re-writing⁶¹ of the older Lutheran hymns in the hymn-books. By the time that the rationalism of the Enlightenment had fully merged with Pietism in the 19th Century, Barth concludes, the "moral seriousness" of the subject has really become⁶² the main focus of the hymn. The hymn by this time confesses little more than the existence of the congregation; if there is an allusion to the Holy Spirit, he is the Spirit of "mysticism and morals".⁶³ In short, the cultural forces of the Enlightenment were those to which the Protestant tradition of hymnody conformed itself, not the requirements of the Holy Spirit. The rise of Neo-Protestantism is seen by Barth as only a symptom of the process of "inner secularization" in Protestantism, as witnessed by the secularization⁶⁴ of the hymn.

Thus for Barth the real danger of secularization lies not in the church maintaining an open dialogue and relation-

⁶⁰
I, 2 (1938), 254.

⁶²
I, 2 (1938), 256.

⁶⁴
I, 2 (1938), 257.

⁶¹
I, 2 (1938), 255.

⁶³
I, 2 (1938), 257.

ship with the state, but rather in the tacit and inward conformation of church confession with cultural "proclamation". As the present reality which exists on the basis of the future possibility of the communio sanctorum, the church can only be the place where God maintains the contradiction between man the sinner and man the reconciled, the place where the Lordship of Christ and the effectiveness of his divine Spirit are confirmed and confessed. For Barth there is no necessity of "delivering" the church from any present challenge to its autonomy or the authenticity of its message on the part of culture, for "where the church is a church she is already delivered."⁶⁵

65

Karl Barth, Theological Existence Today!, tr. by R. Birch Hoyle (Lexington: American Theological Library Association Committee on Reprinting, 1962), p. 17. Original: Theologische Extenz Heute! (Theologische Existenz Heute, 1), 1933.

Chapter Four

THE PRACTICAL RELEVANCE OF THE APPLIED DOCTRINE

1. Biblical Criticism

Karl Barth was never a scholar of the Bible. At every point and in every paragraph, he was a confessing theologian for the church. His so-called "positive method" of exegesis in the Church Dogmatics is tendentious at best, and downright Marcionite at worst. He will range from a harmonizing synthesis of Old Testament and New Testament passages in the pursuit of a key concept to the analysis of grammatical "proofs" of theological ideas on the basis of isolated words in scripture. Yet it is improper to criticize Barth solely on the grounds that his systematics lacks a concrete methodology of Biblical analysis; Barth must be understood as a theologian and only as a theologian. His contribution to the discipline of Biblical study was a historical and a facilitating contribution: historical in the sense of analyzing the history of Biblical scholarship from the hermeneutical principle of orthodoxy versus heresy, delimiting the fitting subject-matter of all such scholarship--God's revelation in Christ. By his effective revival of Augustine's via negativa as the principle of speaking about God, combined with the relentless questioning of a subject which dates back to the methods of the Phenomenologists and Husserl in particular, Barth persevered at present-

ing the one true possibility and legitimacy of exegesis: faith in the mystery of God's revelation.

This historical aspect of Barth's contribution to the discipline of Biblical scholarship can be seen most clearly in the extended sections of explanatory material in the pages of the Church Dogmatics. In contrast, Barth's facilitating contribution to Biblical scholarship was made a decade and more earlier in the Romerbrief. The first German edition of the commentary, which appeared in 1919, paved the way for a whole new generation of scholarship aimed at Verstehen rather than Erklaerung¹; that is, in contrast to and in contradiction of Dilthey's "relativization" of Biblical hermeneutics into a science of hermeneutical "rules", Barth courageously attempted to do herme-²neutics: to translate Paul's message into the present. This occurred for Barth in terms of a radical critique of culture. Gogarten had reached the same basic insight on the collapse of the spirit of Kulturprotestantismus in Germany following World War I by radically carrying the critical-historical method through to its logical conclusion.³ In the Preface to the first edition of Romans, Barth⁴ had said:

¹ James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb (eds.) New Frontiers in Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), II, 19.

² Ibid., II, 22.

³ Ibid., III, 4.

⁴ Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 1.

The historical-critical method of Biblical investigation has its rightful place: it is concerned with the preparation of the intelligence--and this can never be superfluous. But, were I driven to choose between it and the venerable doctrine of Inspiration, I should without hesitation adopt the latter....Fortunately, I am not compelled to choose between the two.

In his quest for the questions raised by Paul in his contemporary situation and the relationship between those questions and the questions of 20th Century religion and culture, Barth left behind him the hermeneutical "vacuum" created by Dilthey and launched the theological era of "radical theology", theology grounded in the Biblical witness to the grace and judgment of God.

Bultmann's early critique of Barth was only that his presentation of Paul's writing was not "radical" enough: that scholarship must seek to analyze the subject-matter (Sache) of the Biblical text in relation to what it says⁵ (Sprache). Bultmann saw a two-fold problem in the modern exegesis of an ancient text: first, that the language and expression of the author may be inconsistent with the subject matter which he is dealing with; and second, that the use of mythological language in an ancient text may contain objectifications of other-worldly categories which are⁶ totally unintelligible for modern man. Bultmann's famous controversy with Barth over the latter's little book on I Cor. 15.20ff, The Resurrection of the Dead (1924), indicated Bultmann's criticism of Barth's "pneumatic" method

⁵ Robinson and Cobb, Frontiers, II, 29-32.

⁶ Ibid., II, 33.

of exegesis;⁷ concretely, Bultmann denied Barth's assertion that historical exegesis could be separated from theological exegesis.⁸

Yet, as Robinson has suggested,⁹ Bultmann's programme of distinguishing Biblical kerygma from its mythological underpinnings may be understood as the attempt to develop a critical method of exegesis which, although more "radical" in its approach to the Bible than Barth was willing to be, could be used to validate Barth's key theological insight: all true theology must be understood as human obedience to the Word of God.¹⁰

Barth's "principle" for the understanding of Biblical texts which he employs in the Church Dogmatics is indeed derived from his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Holy scripture as a witness to God's revelation participates in that revelation through the witnessing power of the Holy Spirit.¹¹ Barth will even attempt to do his own limited type of "de-mythologizing" on the basis of the doctrine of the Holy

⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of a Theological Exegesis of the New Testament", Zwischen den Zeiten, III (1925), 334-57, tr. by Louis De Grazia in Robinson, The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology, p. 255.

⁸ Ibid., p. 256.

⁹ The suggestion was made at a meeting of Rel 467: Dialectic Theology, a course led by Robinson at the Claremont Graduate School in the Spring of 1973.

¹⁰ See Carl Michalson, The Witness of Radical Faith (Nashville: Tidings, 1974), p. 52-61.

¹¹ I, 2 (1938), 481ff.

Spirit: for example, in relation to the idea of the Virgin Birth (a dogmatic idea, we are quick to add, and not a Biblical idea), Barth says that the passage in Mt. 1 does indicate the miracle of the birth of Jesus as being wholly independent of human volition and action:¹²

The relationship of this man (Jesus) to the Holy Spirit is so close and so special that he owes no more and no less than his existence itself and as such to the Holy Spirit.

Yet notwithstanding the arbitrariness of such an approach to the Bible, we must re-assert that it was Barth's theological project which made modern exegesis possible: a whole new age of thinking and speaking about scripture in light of God's claim upon man in revelation, most adequately realized in the scholarship of Rudolf Bultmann.

2. Church Growth

Bishop Charles F. Golden of the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church convened the 125th session of that Annual Conference on June 13, 1975 with the following ten-point challenge to all ordained and lay members:¹³

- 1) Let us seek a minimum of 10% gain in membership annually for the next six years.
- 2) Let each church become a growing ground in which the call to ministry may find a climate for acceptance and development.

¹²

III, 2 (1948), 333.

¹³

Journal of the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference, Official Record of the 125th Annual Session, June 13-17, 1975, p. 42-3.

- 3) Let us thoroughly prepare all new prospects for United Methodist membership in the history, polity and doctrines of our church prior to confirmation. Let no one be uninformed about what is required from all practicing Christians in the United Methodist Church.
- 4) Let us prepare the way for full acceptance of ministerial leadership in all our churches on the basis of criteria other than the race, sex or ethnicity of the ministerial leadership being sought.
- 5) Let us close this quadrennium in the 100% fiscal class of conferences in United Methodism.
- 6) Let us strive to give as much for others as for ourselves in the next six years with a considerable number of our churches moving in this category annually.
- 7) Let us make maximum use of the facilities we have established for ministry and service to the total needs of the communities in which we are located.
- 8) Let us have one or more Advance Specials accepted by each church of the Conference.
- 9) Let us be open to the leadings of the Holy Spirit and sensitive to the numerous ways God may reveal Himself to you and others.
- 10) Finally, my friends, let us love one another as Christ has loved us all.

To categorize, points 1) and 3) deal with church membership; points 2), 4) and 7) with the ministry; points 5), 6) and 8) with stewardship ("100% fiscal class" in point 5 refers to the benevolence apportionments system in United Methodism which supports World Service, Black College Fund, etc.; presumably point 6 refers to reducing the administrative expense at the local church level); and points 9) and 10) deal with the Christian faith. Notwithstanding the somewhat haphazard listing of points in these various cate-

gories, the Bishop's challenge says a few very important things by its structure and emphasis:

- 1) Numerical growth in church membership comes first.
- 2) The love of Christians for one another comes last (even "finally").
- 3) The Holy Spirit and his "leadings" comes next to last, and follows all the "practical challenges" of church membership, ministry and stewardship.

Perhaps the listed order of the ten challenges is not the only criterion for understanding them. Yet especially in a public speaking situation, and in the case of a long list, the order is critical.

A Barthian understanding of the Holy Spirit would have prevented such a serious mis-ordering of the goals of this or any other Annual Conference. In its present form, Bishop Golden's challenge lays primary emphasis on the "abstractly extensive growth" (See Chapter Three, n.43 above) of the church and no emphasis upon the obedience, proclamation, witness, community or worship of God in the church. This critical weakness is a direct consequence of the juxtaposition of points 1) and 9). The reference to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who makes the communio sanctorum possible and in turn creates the possibility of the present church, is added almost as an embarrassed afterthought, slipped in right before the concluding dramatic pause "Finally,...". Included as it is in point 9), the word "leadings" (viz., of the Holy Spirit) is a mockery. With all respect to Bishop Golden, we can and must do better than

this in the United Methodist Church. As a church, we must attest the Gospel of Christ. In every word and deed, even in the "opening sentences" of church and conference meetings such as these, we must attest the Gospel. Which is more of an abstract goal for the church, horizontal growth or spiritual renewal? Our church will grow only as God wills it, through the activity of his Spirit.

3. Evangelism

The Christian churches in Scottsdale have recently been given the opportunity to engage in a community-wide program of house-to-house evangelism, led and co-ordinated by the Campus Crusade for Christ.¹⁴ As a member of the staff of Scottsdale United Methodist Church, I was offered the option of approving SUMC's participation in the Campus Crusade for Christ program or preparing an alternative program for an evangelical effort in 1976. This provided me with a good opportunity to apply Barth's understanding of the "evangelical spirit" (See above, p. 52-3) in my personal ministry. Without making an extensive listing of administrative details, this is a rough outline of the evangelism plan which I am proposing to our Administrative Board and Council on Ministries:

"A WALK IN THE SPIRIT"

"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." (Gal. 5.25)

14

See the attached promotional flyer at the end of the paper.

- 1) Utilize the existing parish zone plan to assist in the locating of homes for visits.
- 2) Recruit from each parish zone a visitation co-ordinator who will in turn recruit a team of callers from that zone.
- 3) Meet with the whole group of visitation co-ordinators and callers, training them to make an evangelical visit, and assign each caller a packet of cards listing other church members in his zone on whom calls are to be made to recruit more callers.
- 4) Meet with this larger group of callers, do more training, and assign each caller a set of names and addresses for new residents in his or her zone.
- 5) Utilize report-back and recording procedures for all calls.
- 6) Support the program with a three-week series of sermons on God, the Holy Spirit, and the Christian community.
- 7) Sponsor a community-wide series of dinners at the church at the conclusion of the three-week period, inviting community leaders to speak on the topic "Church and Community".

The training for the evangelism callers will emphasize the following points:

- 1) You are making this call not to "convert" anyone to Christianity, but to let God's Holy Spirit work in you.
- 2) Find out all you can about the person's needs before you make the call. If he or she is a new resident, what special kinds of information might be helpful?
- 3) Have available a variety of materials with information about community services, schools, cultural events, voting districts, emergency and hospital numbers, bus routes, etc. Offer a copy of the church newsletter and bulletin.
- 4) Identify yourself as a neighbor, and then as a member of the church. Walk to as many calls as possible.

- 5) Find out all you can about the person's needs during the call. Are there children or other family members in the household? What are his/her interests and hobbies?
- 6) Avoid the temptation to tell your own story of personal need, misery, trouble, etc., which you have found help with in the church. Leave your Bible and your diary at home.
- 7) Listen to the person's story. Be attentive. Let your own attention be directed to the area of conversation which opens up.
- 8) Be friendly and appreciative even if you don't feel like it just then. Let God's love take over. Enjoy what you are doing. Smile. Look "redeemed".
- 9) Offer to help. If the person is out picking dandelions in his yard, get down and pick some with him. What can you do to serve this neighbor?
- 10) Invite the person or family to come to church with you. Offer a ride. Invite them to one of the church dinners--as your guest.
- 11) Remember, above all, that God and his love are what really matters. You don't have to "succeed" in your calling, for in Christ God "succeeded" for you.

4. Worship

As Barth noted, it would almost have been better if the hymns of Luther and Gerhardt had been allowed to be excluded from the Neo-Protestant hymn-books altogether; then, perhaps the difference between the Zeitgeist of the Enlightenment and the communio¹⁵ of the Holy Spirit would have been made undeniably clear. The importance of emphasizing, e.g., Luther's hymns in the contemporary worship service is very great; yet it will not happen in United Methodism without

¹⁵

I, 2 (1938), 256.

a struggle. Many congregations, it seems, would be quite content to sing "How Great Thou Art", "Just As I Am", and "Blessed Assurance" week in and week out as part of the Sunday service. The struggle to restore the confessional hymn to the modern service is a necessary struggle, a struggle that is quite properly and necessarily a part of the upholding of the Christian community. There are at least three things that a church needs in order to even hope for a measure of progress in this area:

- 1) A good organist,
- 2) A good choir,
- 3) A plan for teaching the congregation to sing the hymns.

The local minister needs to realize that the hymn is probably the single strongest confessional form which is at work in his or her congregation. Parishioners who could not recite the Creed from memory if their lives depended on it are able to recite tomes of crude and often downright gruesome "theology" as it occurs in the texts of their favorite hymns, verse by verse. The possibility of learning a new hymn (preferably, an old hymn) every month is a good one, as is the idea of a pre-worship half-hour of hymn practice. Support must be given through the hymn-learning process through the Sunday sermon, bulletin, and the church newspaper.

What most of this amounts to is extra work for the minister, who may ordinarily choose the hymns ten minutes prior to the Invocation. He or she will need to integrate

the worship service more carefully, so that the hymns "make sense" in relation to the church year and scriptural text for the day. He or she may even need to learn to sing. Finally, not only should a proper selection of hymns be made,¹⁶ but it should be sung as it was meant to be sung.¹⁷ Barth warns:

If Luther's "A safe stronghold our God is still" is sung with the same breath and intention as, say, E.M. Arndt's "I know whom I believe", then it just ceases to be Luther's hymn. Even Reformation praise of God disappears in the gurgling gullet of modern religious self-confession.

5. Proclamation

Even after church "institutional" forms as church growth, evangelism and worship have been mentioned, the question of the radical claim of God's Spirit upon us remains. As a child of God who exists in the church and in the world on the basis of his possibility of forgiveness in Christ, man must bear witness to the Gospel. What forms will that witness take? What actions will it encompass? In turn, what positions on social or cultural issues is it legitimate and necessary for the church to take?

It has been my experience during a brief span of full-time appointed ministry in the United Methodist Church that the most difficult task which a minister faces is the task of drawing the connection between the proclamation of

¹⁶

See Appendix II.

¹⁷

I, 2 (1938), 256.

the Bible and the present situation; in a word, the hermeneutical task. This task goes far beyond the scope of the Sunday sermon. It goes to the heart of the existence of any congregation, to the church meetings, the youth work, publications, visitation, counseling, and even the personnel practices of a large church office. What is a given church/congregation saying to its community and world, by the breakdown of its budget or the profile of its membership? Is the Gospel being witnessed to?

An example from recent experience will perhaps help to clarify my questions. A large United Methodist church hired as the church secretary a woman who had been naturalized as an American citizen for seven years. Her heritage and language was from Germany, and she was a member of a local Lutheran congregation. Her job responsibilities included answering the office telephone and recruiting volunteer office workers from the church membership. She was asked to resign from her position as church secretary of the church by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee Chairman after she had served for only a few months, on the grounds that she was not performing her job in an efficient manner. Now every other member of that church staff, after the requisite time of getting used to a new secretary and clarifying responsibilities and relationships, was in agreement that she was performing quite acceptably. Yet she was asked to leave by a person who had taken the responsibility to do so. After her resig-

nation, another member of the Pastor-Parish Committee, who was a successful self-employed businessman, remarked that some of the business and personnel practices of the church were such that if he operated his own company in a similar manner, his business would fall as a result. Hence he was in full accord with the decision to ask for the secretary's resignation and seek a more efficient person to do the job.

All other details aside, this last response seems to me to come exactly to the point. Does the church exist in order to "succeed" according to the standards of success set by the business community? Of course every church must handle administrative details which come as a part of its existence as an incorporated structure, in the ownership of property, the acquisition of insurance, and all the rest. These responsibilities must be executed responsibly and in the interests of the congregation. Yet is it not exactly the character of the church as the present manifestation of the communio sanctorum, the witnessing community, that its first duty is to the reconciliation which God creates between man and man in Jesus Christ? As such, a church which lays primary emphasis upon fiscal or numerical success has fallen prey to the secularization which is the greatest danger it faces.

For me, the question reduces to the question of whether a church is truly open to the leading and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Only as a group of believers self-

consciously gathered to bear witness to the grace of God can the Kirche become the Gemeinde. Only in constant readiness for the "utter novelty and strangeness" of God's will in the worldly sphere does the church live according to its true possibility of existence.

Once more, we turn to Barth for an understanding of the church's witness. For Barth, the church exists in the freedom of Christ which has been made the possibility of its own freedom. As the church which is the place where the Word of God is proclaimed and witnessed to, the church is radically independent,¹⁸ independent from its cultural milieu as well as the dominant political ideology. The church has this freedom on the concrete basis of the work of the Holy Spirit; it cannot acquire its own freedom but only forfeit it.

The church is a witnessing community as the Word of God in its full σκέψη δαλόν before man's fallenness is allowed to work its own work of inner transformation. In this place where the truth of God's Word stands as the criterion against which all human words are judged as false and fragmentary, the only possibility for human witnessing exists where men confess the Triune God and the threefold reality of the work of the Holy Spirit:¹⁹

- 1) The Son of God has come in the flesh;
- 2) The Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son has been poured out upon the church;

¹⁸
I, 1 (1932), 144f.

¹⁹
I, 2 (1938), 757.

- 3) The duty of speaking about God has been laid upon the church.

Though his style in the Church Dogmatics is often obtuse, his polemical thrusts unflinchingly merciless, and his exegesis unintelligible, Karl Barth has laid before the 20th Century the honest witness of one believer to the ultimate and incorrigible authority of God's Word. In him more clearly than in any other theologian we are able to see the authentic focus of all true reflection and action on the part of the church: the Bible, which may lend itself to many "interpretations" but in the final result performs the critical interpretation upon man. For this life's work of confession, the church of today not only owes to Barth a debt of gratitude but also the tribute of a lost traveler who has been led, by the hand of an experienced guide, back to his homeland.

Verbum Dei manet in Aeternum

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I

Three Sermons

These three sermons were written during the period of my reading in Barth's Church Dogmatics as I prepared to write this paper. They are an attempt to translate a Barthian understanding of God and man in the Holy Spirit into the life of Scottsdale United Methodist Church, where I have had the privilege of serving as Associate Minister since June, 1974. The sermons were delivered at our worship services of October 19, November 16 and December 28, 1975, respectively.

MARK 11:12-23

"IN THE IMAGE OF MAN"

If you and I had been among the disciples of Jesus on the day when the incident in this Gospel passage occurred, I have the feeling that we would have wondered about our Lord's sanity. Can you imagine trying to describe the scene to someone else?

"You say he did what?"

"He was talking to...a fig tree...."

"I don't believe it!"

"Well - he had been walking for a long time, and he was hungry."

"Oh."

"Actually, he was cursing the fig tree because it didn't have any fruit."

"But, this isn't even the season for figs!"

"I know. But you have to understand that our Lord Jesus gets very upset at times..."

"I'm beginning to see that."

"You see - He's the Messiah who is to come, and looks at things different from most people!"

"Hmm."

How in the world are we to understand Jesus' cursing the fig tree? What possible lesson can the story teach us? Even the scholars who edited the Oxford Annotated Bible are embarrassed about this passage. At the bottom of the page in the Oxford Bible it says, "it is uncertain why Jesus said that". Most interpreters or preachers either ignore this passage or else conjure up some bizarre moralistic explanation about faith or prayer, how we had better shape up or else get withered, or worse yet, tossed into the sea like that mountain. "Fig trees and mountains!" Hogwash! If only I had a fig for every time I heard that sort of thing.

No, in and of the details of the story as we have them, the story just doesn't make any sense. There is no reason why Jesus should curse a poor defenseless fig tree which was taking a well-deserved season off from fig-making.

First of all, the story of the cursing of the fig tree must be read together with the story of Jesus' cleansing the temple at Jerusalem. We see in this larger passage in Mark a witness to both the power and the religious ideals of Jesus. We see his power at work when he miraculously withers the fig tree, and we learn about his religious ideals when he drives the merchants out of the temple. For Jesus who was a Jew, the temple was a holy place, set apart by God to be "a house of prayer for all the nations", as the prophet Isaiah had written. It was a special sanctuary

where believers could live their faith in worship, protected from the hounding and hawking and bickering of the marketplace. Now Jesus above all others saw how important it was to minister to those who found their living in the streets and alleyways. Yet as a Jew he loved the temple, the symbol of God's presence among His people.

Thus in this story Jesus is not angry at the traditions of the temple or the temple itself; he is angry at what men have allowed the temple to become. The symbolic meaning of the temple as the house of God had been corrupted and lost. A new symbolic meaning had taken its place, one of worldly greed and selfish behaviour. What horror must have rattled in the voice of Jesus when he said, "YOU HAVE MADE IT A DEN OF THIEVES!"

I believe that we must look at the fig tree in the story much in the same way that we look at the temple: as something basically good which has been corrupted or misused by men. This brings me to my first point:

The creation of God is GOOD. We have the beautiful witness of Genesis 1:31, and need no other: "And God saw everything that he had made, AND BEHOLD, IT WAS VERY GOOD!" This applies to the totality of creation, to every life-process and cycle in nature, to every fact and detail. It applies to human sexuality as the highest gift given to human beings. It applies to all that we can hear, see and feel in the world around us. Nature has a way of living, of quietly and patiently taking care of all problems and circumstances.

Without batting an eyelash, Nature also accepts death as a part of life. There can be no life without death. There can be no filling without an emptying to make room for it. This is the triumph of the natural order.

And in the Hebrew tradition, the fig tree had long been a symbol of the goodness of creation. In the Paradise story of Genesis the fig is the only tree mentioned by name. As early as 3000 B.C. writers were mentioning the fig tree and its importance. In Judges 9, the fig tree along with the olive tree and the grape-vine claim royal dignity among all the trees. The fig tree became one of the most widely-cultivated fruit trees in all of the holy land. And with cultivation, naturally came the ownership of this tree which produced such unusually ripe and lush fruit. This brings me to my second point, which stands over against the first:

Man corrupts the good creation by misusing it. And this happens whenever man tries to remake the creation in his own image. God's creation does not reflect the image of man; it reflects the image of God.

It's very hard for persons like you and me to say what the image of God looks like. Our language is just too limited most of the time. Yet some things can be said about what the image of God might be likened to. Let me try out with you some of the things that I think the image of God is like:

First, the image of God is like the Colorado River, which cut the mighty Glen Canyon and the Grand Canyon over hundreds of millions of years, starting as a surface stream which began 2,000 feet above where the river now runs. The river cut those canyons! There is raw power in that river, and infinite patience. Power and patience. For me, these are qualities which God possesses.

Second, the image of God is like the cycle of survival in the wilderness, with each creature perfectly suited to its own particular purpose: the rabbit, the coyote, the great owls and hawks - each engaged in the struggle for life, and each belonging where it is. There is beauty in that life-cycle, and also violence. Beauty and violence. For me, these are also qualities which God possesses. In the Old Testament, YHWH very often was seen as exercising his will through violent events. And in the New Testament, that violent picture is tempered by the beauty of Jesus' spirit. Yet even Jesus acted violently when standing up for his religious ideals called for it, as we have seen in the temple-cleansing.

Third, the image of God is like a beautiful fig tree growing in the desert. Rich fruit, moisture, cooling shade - in the most unfavorable place for growing things. We will not understand the importance of the fig tree for the Jews until we appreciate how arid the lands in Palestine are. This can also help us to understand what it really means to be baptized! In this dry place there grew fig trees, a triumph of the adaptability of plant life - and in turn a witness to the majesty of God. There is life in that fig tree, where there should be no hope for life. And for me, life is the most important quality which God possesses.

I have named three things which I think that the image of God is like - three instances of the GOOD in creation. And each of these things has been corrupted by man through misuse. Over and over again, human "civilization" has damaged God's creation by trying to re-make it in the image of man. How has this happened for the three things I mentioned?

First, the river. The majestic Colorado River, a symbol of the power and patience of God in nature, has been dammed at a dozen places - mainly for hydroelectric generation and for recreation. The Glen Canyon is now mostly full of lake, with thousands of smaller side canyons and their wildlife lost forever - and now every year thousands of weekenders

can water-ski (in a clockwise direction) upon Lake Powell, named not to honor but to dishonor the memory of the great river explorer John Wesley Powell. Plans have already been begun to flood portions of the Grand Canyon for the same purpose! What do we show about ourselves as human beings when we destroy in a few years what was built up over the span of millions of years? We show that we are more interested in water-skiing and labor-saving electrical appliances than we are in the image of God in our world.

Second, the cycle of survival in nature. In many wilderness areas the animal ecosystem is no longer working because the natural predators have been eliminated by human intervention. Now I don't know where we got the idea that predatory animals are bad animals. Perhaps from some cheap "Disney Productions" movie made after Walt Disney's death. Perhaps not. Yet the fact remains that such vital and well-adapted creatures as the coyote have been nearly extincted by hunting (not because there is much profit in selling dead coyotes. We all understand profit as the only reason that some persons do anything!) but because the coyote is a predator and eats some of our favorite furry, cuddly, docile, and dumb creatures like the rabbit and the sheep. Now, don't get me wrong, I like rabbits and sheep, but they are dumb. And because the coyote preyed on other animals, he got "romanticized" out of existence. So now we have small, plant-eating mammals overrunning our forests, upsetting the balance of nature. In the case of the coyote and others we have destroyed the life-cycle of nature by trying to remake it in our own "peaceful" image. We have corrupted the image of God.

Third, the fig tree in the desert. And at this point the role of Christ for us becomes very clear. I said that in the time of Jesus the fig tree had become one of the most widely-cultivated trees in the holy land. Widely-Cultivated. Some bright businessman saw that figs meant big business, and vast fortunes were made on figs in that place and time. In fact, rich people had even started the practice of buying a fig tree and transplanting it near their homes. Having a fig tree in one's yard had in effect become a status symbol in that culture, rather like having multiple Cadillacs or Mercedes-Benzes is in ours.

(See Kittel, TDNT, σῦκον)

Now, into this scene walks Jesus. And what does he see? He sees the venerable fig tree, for hundreds of years the symbol of new life in the desert and thus part of the image of God, domesticated and perverted into a symbol of personal affluence. It is easier now to see why he cursed the tree!

Just as in the case of the money-changers in the temple, men had corrupted the image of God by trying to remake it in their own image - an image of greed and rapacity.

The Spirit of Christ is a force which is at work in the world to cut through our selfishness and insensitivity to nature. It also cuts through our coldness toward other persons. Christ was and is at work in the world to restore the image of God, to purify the symbols of that image. Have you ever thought about damming up the Glen Canyon as being a sinful thing? I believe that it was.

This brings me to my third point, which is that the work of Christ is irresistible. Even though through misuse we have corrupted the image of God, Christ is working through us and others to purify that image again. This is the faith that can move mountains - not mountains of stone, but mountains of intolerance and ignorance.

In East Berlin there is a modern tower which was raised to decorate the Alexander-Platz, a square in the Communist sector. At the top of the tower there is a metal ball which is curved so that a very strange thing happens every day as the sun sets in the west. What happens is that the image of a cross appears in the center of that ball. When they first saw it, West Berliners shouted back across the wall, "Die Alexander-Kirche! Die Alexander-Kirche!" ("The Alexander-Church! The Alexander-Church!"), and the East German officials were so incensed that they sent engineers to re-position the tower to eliminate the cross reflection. With cranes and instruments, they are still working - and every day at sundown, the cross still faces West. It cannot be eliminated.

This, then, is the challenge which Jesus brings to us in our Gospel lesson - the challenge to reevaluate what we have done to the world and to each other. Nature is not made in the image of man, yet it is good! And our brothers and sisters were not made merely to reflect our desires and feelings. In this world the image of God can be found - an image with the power and patience of the Colorado River; an image with the beauty and violence of the life-cycle; an image with the new life of the fig tree in the desert - Christ's life, new for you every day.

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT"

Everyone has his or her own favorite passage in all of Scripture - that part of God's Word which seems to address one's inner, personal life most directly and meaningfully. If we were to make a list of "Treasured Bible Passages", I'm sure that many persons would vote for the 23rd Psalm and its profound awareness of God's care and providence; many others would claim the Creation story in Genesis 1-3 as the passage which best shows the richness of God's love and activity, in his creation; still others would choose the birth stories from Matthew or Luke which are traditionally read at the Christmas celebration. There would be many other favorites, and all of them would be good choices; and each would represent part of the claim which God's Word lays upon a particular person or group of persons.

Now I don't mean to suggest that we go through the Bible "picking and choosing" among the many different passages and points of view, discarding all else in favor of one small piece which we happen to agree with - for to do that would be to deny the authority of God's Word in our lives. The 66 books of that tremendous religious library known as the Holy Bible are not offered "For approval" like a many-colored stamp collection, nor are they meant to be served up to the church "buffet style".

Every person who claims to be a Christian has already submitted his or her life to the demands of God's Word; anyone who fails to make that surrender of self before God, I think, does not know the meaning of what Paul called "baptism in the Holy Spirit". Not every Bible verse, however, is easily understood, nor is every verse easy to accept once it has been understood. When the "gentle Jesus, meek and mild" whom we see pictured in scenes of tranquility and friendship to everyone turns round and says, "I come not to bring peace, but a sword!" (Mt. 10:34), that causes some heads to turn. The great German clergyman and teacher Karl Barth remarked that there was "a strange world within the Bible", and his reflections on that world in his commentary on Romans ignited a whole new age of theology and preaching. Barth saw that St. Paul was not the easily-accessible teacher of morals and church law that the last century had claimed that he was; instead he was a brilliant thinker engaged in the deepest and mortal combat with a world which was at bottom, evil.

Thankfully, not every passage in Scripture is as shocking as some of those passages which purport to come from the mouth of Jesus or Paul. There is also an unfathomable well of the richest and most assuring words of blessing in Scripture, containing the message of God's salvation in Christ--the GOOD

NEWS that we are gathered to share. But just a moment.... I want to go back to those "favorite passages" in the Bible with you.

As I think about it, my favorite long passage has always been that magnificent collection of Jesus' sayings and teachings which we call the Sermon on the Mount. There is so much richness in those three chapters in Matthew - enough for a lifetime of reflection. In seminary, we devoted an entire semester of study to the Sermon on the Mount, and barely scratched its surface. As I re-read the Sermon again and again, each time a new insight jumps out at me with amazing clarity and truth. Indeed, these words seem to be that solid foundation which the wise man would build his house upon, safe from all the elements and dangers.

Yet right at the beginning of Jesus' great sermon comes a message which challenges me more obstinately every time I read it. It is the very first thing that Jesus says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven". Reading that single verse starts us on a great journey of discovery. Who are "the poor in spirit"? What does it mean to be "poor in spirit"? In his version of Jesus' great sermon Luke has apparently given up trying to find out what that means; he simply has, "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God". Luke has chosen an economic interpretation of "the poor in spirit". Yet is that enough? Is it enough to merely bless the economically poor and by association to condemn all others?

At this point, as a middle-class American, I begin to feel threatened! I begin to think about those two cars that Kathy and I own, along with the two bicycles, several musical instruments, and a sizable list of electrical appliances. There is no way in which I would call myself poor in an economic sense. So what am I to do? This is no small challenge that the Gospel brings to my doorstep!

The problem gets more complicated when we look at this morning's passage from Luke, which is basically a collection of Jesus' sayings on how difficult salvation really is. Even the disciples of Jesus may be shut out from the Kingdom of Heaven, symbolized by the great banquet where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets sit at fellowship together. Jesus says, "Many will seek to enter and will not be able." Now that has to mean many believers, those who really want to go to heaven. I count myself as one who definitely wants to go there, and it sure would be nice to see you all there, too! Yet no matter what I want for myself - it says here that I just might not make it. "Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." In effect, nothing I do will insure that I get to sit down to supper with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Now, when you add this "revoltin' development" to what Jesus said about the poor, you have what's known as getting stuck on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the poor; and on the other hand, nothing I can do (and that includes making myself poor by giving everything away) will get me through that tantalizingly narrow door. This applies to every area of life, not only the economic sphere: it applies to the political sphere (and I thought that since FDR, all the angels were Democrats!); it applies to how we relate to our nation (have you heard the man on the radio singing "Your flag decal won't get you into Heaven any more"?); it even applies to what church we worship in or whether we have a church at all (but please, don't leave yet!). Now the challenge of God's Word really begins to come home to me. What can I do?

My first reaction is to scramble like crazy to re-define what "poor" means. But that would be copping out through language games and avoiding God. Another possibility might be to announce that for us "modern" Christians, whether or not we go to heaven after this life just isn't a meaningful question anymore. Yet that one makes me very edgy, and gets me to wondering whether I have any right to fool around with the church's teaching like that. If we throw out the hope of being united in Christ's Resurrection, then what do we have left as Christians which makes us very different from any other happy-go-lucky group of humanists? Well, to try again.....I want to propose as a third possibility that we look very carefully at what being "poor in spirit" means, and work at defining that concept.

First, let me give you an illustration: In 1934 a young businessman named Nelson B. Rockefeller commissioned the great artist Diego Rivera to paint a mural on the side of his daddy's new building (I mean...the Rockefeller Center in New York City). Now, everybody knew that Rivera was a Marxist, but being radical was "in" that year, so on went the project. Much to the chagrin of the Rockefeller family, the finished painting had right in the middle of it a likeness of Nikolai Lenin - the hero of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia - saving the peasants from the capitalists! Needless to say, this didn't set at all well, and Rockefeller ordered the destruction of the mural. Now all of this may not seem very surprising until you realize that Rockefeller said that he would have just as soon had the painting moved to the Museum of Modern Art (where only the wealthy patrons could have seen it). The point, I think, is that revolutionary art like Rivera's work was okay for the power elite of this country to see, but not okay for the working-class New Yorkers who might "get ideas" seeing it as they passed by the Rockefeller Center. In effect, a very large portion of the New York population was simply not given credit for thinking for themselves.

For me, the term "poor in spirit" might well apply to those working men and women who would never even think of overthrowing our capitalist system, because of their dedication to their country, but who were not allowed to exercise their own imaginations even to disagree with that painting on the Rockefeller Center. In a word, they were power-less. Their opinion was simply not needed.

We may look around us and find many examples of powerless persons: refugees torn from their homelands, older citizens forced to eat less when their fixed incomes cannot meet inflating prices, ethnic minority groups, women who struggle for a college degree and then find that the job market wants them only for their typing skill, the hungry and those who lack proper medical care - the list is very long. I think of the Native American, perhaps a man of the Navajo people, who is paid 5, 6, - even 7 thousand dollars a year for his labor. Now he is certainly not poor in an economic sense, but what of his spirit-when his job might be to sort the bottles and cans out of the city's garbage to be buried on his own reservation land. Can you imagine what that must mean to him?

Other examples of what "poor in spirit" might mean come to mind: that quality of humanity which led Albert Schweitzer to sacrifice a brilliant career in science, theology and music to live as an impoverished doctor in Africa; the completely self-giving character of Frances of Assisi; the saving grace of Florence Nightingale on the battlefield. These saints took on the spirit of poverty in order to serve God through helping other persons. They saw in the other person the claim of God's will upon them. More than that, they became what their fellow human beings needed; messengers of healing and hope in a world of chaos and despair. Like the converted Paul who "Became a Jew to the Jews, and a Greek to the Greeks, in order that I might be all things to all men,that I might by all means save some", theirs was the spirit of identifying with the poor and the powerless.

It might be argued that doing the things that Schweitzer or Frances or Nightingale did is simply doing something for oneself, and as such is only another "work" which won't help us in the eyes of God. Yet what they did was precisely not done for themselves - it was done for the other person. For me to be "poor in spirit" means losing myself in the task of helping someone else. It means relinquishing the power which might keep someone else powerless, and working for that person's empowerment. It means, in the end result, living in the spirit of total openness to the will of God: as Jesus said, "Not my will, but thy will be done".

I want to propose this as a definition of the "poor in spirit": those who are powerless, and those who sincerely and actively

identify with the powerless. I believe that the community of the "poor in spirit", who by Jesus' words have the Kingdom of Heaven as their own, consists of the needy and those who selflessly serve them. The work of this latter group of servants is none other than the work of the Suffering Servant as described by Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
Because the Lord has annointed me
to bring good tidings to the afflicted,
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.
(Isaiah 61:1-2a)

This work of identifying with the powerless seems difficult at first. Yet it has already begun in Jesus' ministry and cross, and it continues in every age for everyone who is willing to see it and share in it. For them, the Kingdom of Heaven is already happening. I quote from Modern Religious Thought:

There is an old Jewish tradition which says that in every generation there are at least 36 saints whose goodness saves the world from destruction. Now these 36 saints are hidden from public notice. Not only are they people of no special distinction or fame, but often they are not even known to be saintly. So plain, so commonplace do they appear that no one suspects that they are the spiritual giants whose merits sustain the world. And yet there is no mystery about all this. Their disguise is not so heavy that it cannot be pierced. It is just that we are often too careless or too dull-sighted to notice what is happening about us.

I want to add that there are many more than 36 of these saints in the Christian tradition.

I close with this invitation: Look around you! Open your eyes! There you will see the work and the workers of heaven!

Prayer

Dear God, send your Spirit upon us, that we might be moved to share our power with the powerless, Amen.

JOHN 1:1-14

"CHRIST IN THE MARKET-PLACE"

I have borrowed Bonhoeffer's phrase "Christ in the Market-Place" as my title for two main reasons. First, that during the holiday season with its accompanying outrageous commercialism we are most apt to hope that the Spirit of Christ after all really is there amid the crush of consumers and nervously jingling bells; and second, that I believe the Market-Place as a symbol for our worldly life is actually the first place where the Spirit of Christ calls Christians to be.

You have probably heard an endless stream of sermons on how un-Christmasy Christmas has become. In a way this is true, what with jolly old St. Nick arriving by helicopter to the shopping malls one weekend after Thanksgiving. Yet in a season which is marked by the giving of gifts we shouldn't be surprised that the merchandisers "tool-up" early - this is only because we live in a highly affluent nation with a very large product-buying population. Planning must occur if a large number of persons are involved, so we can't really fault the stores.

The problem goes much deeper - to the level of how we understand ourselves in relation to our nation and to the Christian teaching.

There seems to be some basic assumptions at work in our culture the whole year 'round, as well as at Christmas: assumptions like "more is always better than less" and "new is always better than old". These assumptions are part of our whole cultural way of life. Now we might say, "Yes, but couldn't it be different just for a little while, during Christmas?" But that would be making the same mistake that is made when someone says, "Just look at all the violence in the world. Christianity has been going for 2000 years now, and it sure hasn't accomplished much!" Christianity is not a "miracle product" which can be called upon to cure all the world's ills, like so much spot remover. Christianity is not a handy tool which we can pick up when we need it, and set back down when we are through.

In the ancient theater there was a contraption that was sort of a crude version of those "sky-buckets" that the power company man rides up in to work on the wires. It was called a Deus ex machina, which simply means, "God from a machine". You see, when it came time in the play for some God-character to intervene, the actor playing Zeus or whatever would be lowered toward the stage, giving the illusion that he was coming down from heaven. One of my college professors once told us the story of a theater group back east which used one

of these contraptions in the production of a Greek play. All went well, he said, until opening night when the actor playing God was being lowered, spouting his most heavenly speech, and he fell out of the bucket, but caught his foot in the webbing. The audience that night witnessed the spectacle of Apollo hanging upside down by the foot, wiggling and struggling, his robe down over his head, and well - it just wasn't very dignified at all! Now I tell you all this because some people still believe that God is zapped magically into the world on Christmas, like an actor in a deus ex machina. It just isn't the case. Never was and never will be. God does not appear just in the nick of time (nor, for that matter, in the Nick of Christmastime - pardon that Clause) to help us out at exactly the moment we need him - either we need God all the time or we don't need God at all.

Christianity is not at the disposal of men and women. The basic witness of the church has been that it's just the opposite - we are at the disposal of God's will in Christ. This means more than just talking about something - it means doing something. It means being able to change our ways of thinking and relating to other persons. This is the Biblical meaning of "conversion" - repentance, or in Greek metanoia - "thinking again".

I believe that John saw how important it was to believe that God's Word "was from the beginning with God" before the birth of Jesus. What does that mean? It means that Christmas is only a part of the total picture of God's relating to men and women in a personal way. Even though the Christmas story sparks memories of our own childhood and families, God's will is not limited by our thoughts and feelings about Christmas. There is a bigger picture of God, a picture that "no one has seen or heard". God's greatness is so great that we can't comprehend it. And so John writes of the birth of Jesus in a careful, mysterious way: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."

Just think of what would happen if someone invented some sure-fire product, maybe a miracle powder, which when sprinkled over cereal or mixed with water, would produce God. People would trample each other to get to the stores to buy it. No home would be without it! Everywhere, people would be busily conjuring up God. And soon, God would become nothing at all, a worn-out amusement that nobody liked anymore, a toy that nobody played with.

Now that seems ridiculous, but this is exactly the type of religious problem that John had to deal with. He faced a group of believers which saw Jesus as just another great man, a "wonder-worker" - sort of a "Stronger than Dirt" - type figure. John had to make sure that these people were

exposed to more of God than just the working of miracles. And so he speaks of the depths of faith, a faith that does not need miracles - "Blessed are those which have not seen and yet believe", as Jesus had said.

Yet even with this knowledge to guide us, we are brought back face to face with a suffering world. Why do people starve? Why are there still wars? In the 1950's when Tom Altizer wrote "God is dead", he surprised and shocked a lot of people. Some were even angered by this threatening idea. Yet what Altizer did was not evil or wrong - he was merely responding to the horrors of global and nuclear war out of the context of the then-current picture of God - a mighty poppa who would prevent all human suffering, who would weigh the world in a big scale and of course decide that our side was right, and so on. When Altizer declared that that God was dead, he was really doing the same thing that John had done so long before - he was telling people that there is a bigger picture of God than the one which they had.

We are faced with a world where human suffering goes on unless humans intervene to stop it. Why are there wars? Because there are not enough pacifists. Why is there starvation? Because there is not a fair system of food distribution. There is a simple and maybe brutal truth in the realization that humans are the cause of human suffering.

Where is God in all of this? Where God chooses to be, and I have to believe that that means "with us". God is not "with us" in the sense of taking sides on national or political issues, but "with us" in the sense of being radically here, through the Spirit of Christ. Here, in a needy face, an outstretched hand, a word of acceptance and concern for another person. In the words of John, God is dwelling among us, suffering along with us, inviting us to decide for love and against the obstacles to love.

Our sister United Methodist Church at Los Arcos, as you know, was organized to be a church to the shopping mall there. This is the idea - to keep the church alive by moving toward the world rather than retreating from it. The Greek word for "church" is ekklēsia meaning "called forth". Christians everywhere are distinguished by the fact that Christ has called them forth to bind up the world's wounds. God is very much alive, and we are alivened in Christ's spirit as we are led to make the connection between Christianity and our secular society. The two are not separate, even though at times they conflict. For worldly values are not by any necessity Christian values, and it is not the job of the church to simply go about approving the ideas and procedures of the world.

This seems at first like a lonely task, this job of ministering in the market-place. It cost Dietrich Bonhoeffer his life, and it has claimed the lives of saints in every age. Yet we are not alone - we are comforted and led by a God who suffered in order to dwell with us, bringing the greatest news of all - "YOU ARE ACCEPTED!" May we live and breathe and work together in that life-giving and gracious message. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it".

APPENDIX B

A SUGGESTED LIST OF "CONFESSIONAL" HYMNS FROM THE UNITED METHODIST HYMNAL, 1966

<u>Number</u>	<u>Title</u>
20	A Mighty Fortress is Our God
26	Holy, Holy, Holy
30	Praise to the Living God
49	Now Thank we all Our God
55	Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
71	All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name
74	All Praise to Thee, For Thou O King Divine
76	At the Name of Jesus
85	O Son of God Incarnate
134	Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove
153	God of Love and God of Power
172	O Thou Who Camest From Above
192	In Christ There Is No East or West
220	Jesus, Priceless Treasure
253	Jesus, My Strength, My Hope
256	Be Thou My Vision
257	Blessed Jesus, at Thy Word
283	Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
292	Christ for the World We Sing
324	Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence
344	Come Father, Son and Holy Ghost
352	Come, O Thou God of Grace
354	O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
359	Hail to the Lord's Anointed
373	Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light
387-8	Hark, the Herald Angels Sing
418	O Sacred Head, Now Wounded
437	The Day of Resurrection
438	Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands
439	Christ the Lord is Risen Today
441	Now the Green Blade Riseth
448	Come Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain
454	Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus
466	Come Down, O Love Divine
469	Father Eternal, Ruler of Creation
475	Turn Back, O Man
481	O Holy City, Seen of John
484	O God of Earth and Altar
526	Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee

The above hymns were chosen on the basis of the hymn-test alone.

PLEASE NOTE:

Appendix III, Evangelism Promotional
Flyer, not microfilmed because of it
being printed on black shiny paper -
this will not reproduce on microfilm.
This flyer is available for consultation
at the School of Theology at Claremont
Library.

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